VOL. 8
STORY AND ART BY
KIA ASAMIYA

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Steam-Punk Mysteries

The place is Steam City, a mixture of London and Tokyo's Asakusa district, and boy detective Narutaki is gaining quite a reputation as he solves the myrlad of mysteries that come to his door.

In his first case, the evil Phantom Knight tricks beautiful nurse Ling Ling and her megamaton robot Goriki into luring Narutaki into a trap. After the defeat of the Phantom Knight, Ling Ling and Goriki ask to join Narutaki and his butler Kawakubo in the Narutaki Detective Agency, and together they form the Steam Detectives.

But their work is just beginning, and the agency finds itself opposed to a dizzying array of villains including not only Phantom Knight, but Ling Ling's evil opposite Lang Lang, abetted by the boy criminal Le Bread; the international terrorist duo from Techland Valhalla, Wolf and Carlos; the maniacal megamaton genius, Dr. Guilty; the ingenious cat-burglar, the Red Scorpion; and the Goriki-obsessed machine fetishist, the Machine Baron.

Between Narutaki's tragic defeat during his first conflict with Techland's terrorists, the destruction of his office by Phantom Knight during the Opera Plaza mystery, and the near loss of Goriki in the most recent battle with Dr. Guilty, the stakes of Narutaki's cases have gone up a notch. Narutaki has no intention of losing another case! But so, too, has Le Bread's enthusiasm for impossible thefts escalated after Phantom Knight's unforgivable destruction of the voices of the Seven Angels of Music. At last, the driving factor behind Le Bread's life of crime is revealed!

Narutaki

Son of the greatest detective in the history of Steam City, the murder of his parents has left him with only his butler's help in his quest to follow in his father's footsteps.

Ling Ling

It is known that the father of the beautiful nurse Ling Ling is the great scientist Dr. Hsu, and Lang Lang is her sister, but Ling Ling's past is still a mystery.

Goriki

A steam-powered megamaton robot who is fiercely loyal to Ling Ling. Somewhere inside its body is the brain of Dr. Hsu.

Kawakubo

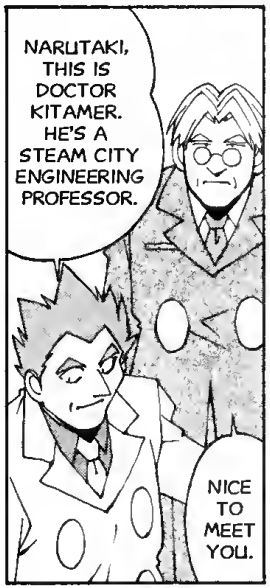
Narutaki's loyal butler and a man of many resources.

CASE TWENTY-FOUR, PART 1

DEATH OF THE BOY DETECTIVE NARUTAKI!!

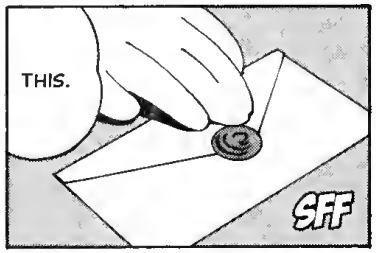
KNCH KNCH
MNCH
MNCH
HOW DID...
...THIS HAMSTER GET SO ENORMOUS?
KLAK
HE HAS A NAME.
TENG SHING!
HMM...
KNCH
KNCH
NICE NAME, HUH?
WHEN HE FIRST CAME HERE...
...HE WAS ALREADY PRETTY BIG.
HOW COULD HE HAVE GOTTEN THIS HUGE?
NO PARTICULAR REASON. HE JUST KEPT ON GETTING BIGGER AND BIGGER...

HUH!?
IF HE KEEPS ON GROWING AT THIS RATE...
BABOOM
MNCH
MNCH
OH, PLEASE, NARUTAKI, THAT'S JUST ABSURD.
WELL, I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT...
SHP
SHP
.....
HMMM
KLIK
KLAK
WHERE'S HE BEEN ALL THIS TIME?


NARUTAKI, THIS IS DOCTOR KITAMER. HE'S A STEAM CITY ENGINEERING PROFESSOR.
NICE TO MEET YOU.

IT'S AN HONOR TO MEET YOU, SIR. I'VE HAD THE GREAT PLEASURE OF READING YOUR BOOKS.
THANK YOU.

MAY I ASK WHY WE'RE HERE?

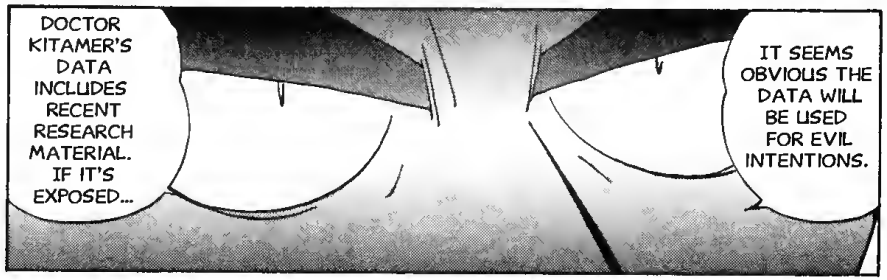

THIS.
SFF

.....
"IN A WEEK WE WILL KIDNAP DOCTOR KITAMER'S DAUGHTER. IF YOU DON'T WANT TO LOSE GINA..."
"...THEN PROVIDE US WITH THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS. WE WILL BOMB YOUR MANSION IF THEY TURN OUT TO BE FAKE."

A KID-NAPPING THREAT!?
HAVE YOU NOTIFIED THE POLICE?

YES, I HAVE.
BUT I DON'T WANT TO CHANCE IT...

THE DOCUMENTS THEY'VE REQUESTED ARE ALL TOP SECRET.

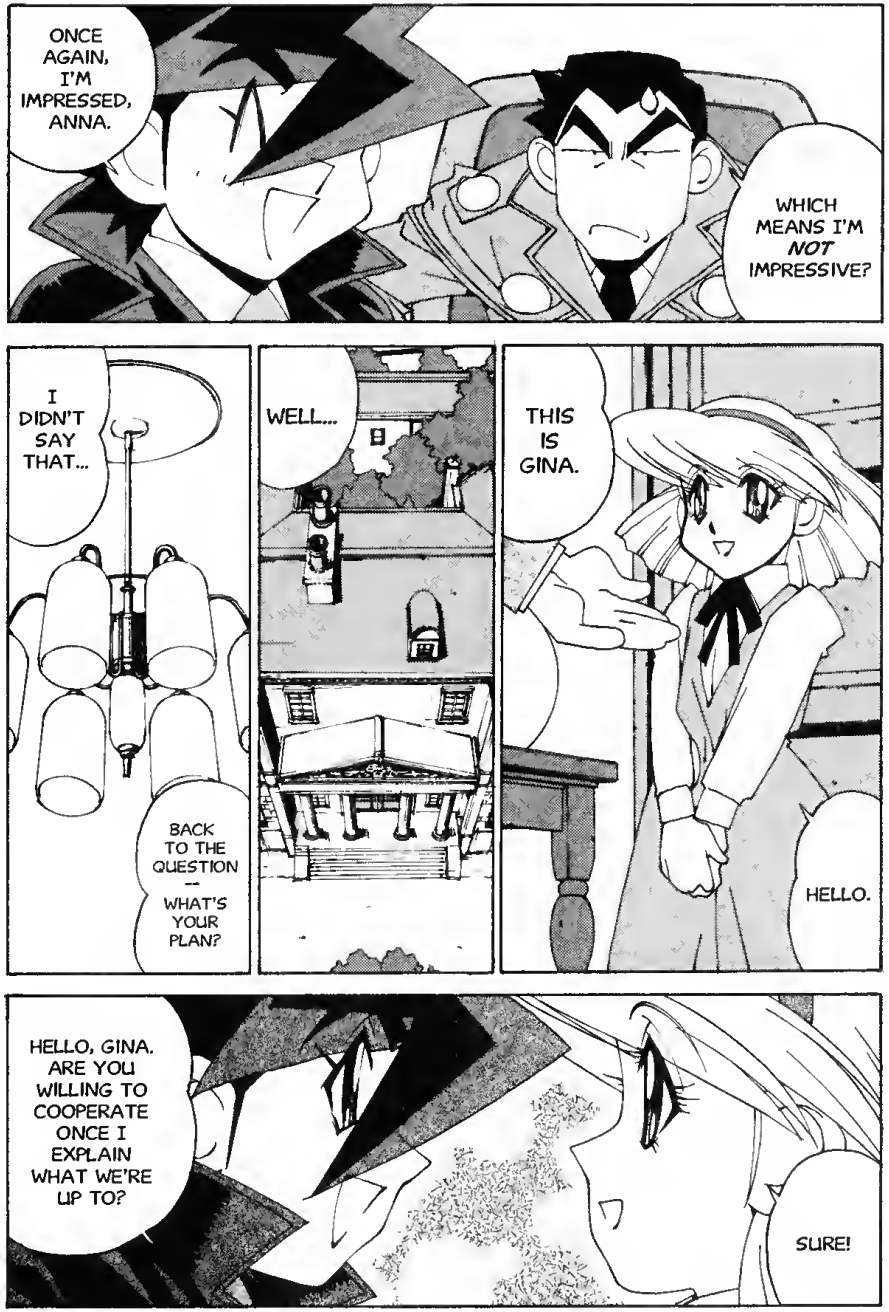

DOCTOR KITAMER'S DATA INCLUDES RECENT RESEARCH MATERIAL. IF IT'S EXPOSED...
IT SEEMS OBVIOUS THE DATA WILL BE USED FOR EVIL INTENTIONS.

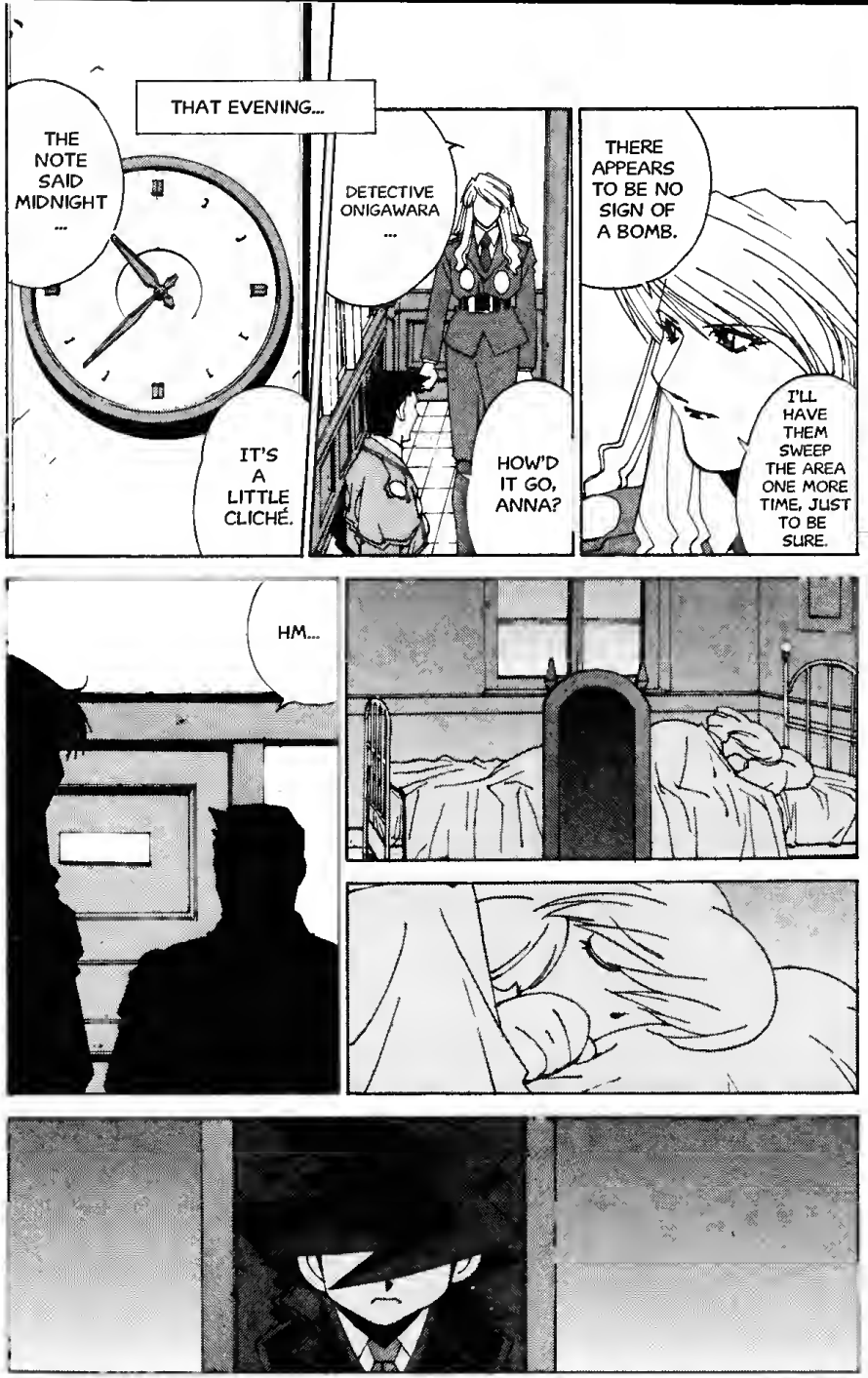
BUT WITH MY CHILD'S LIFE AT RISK...
STILL...

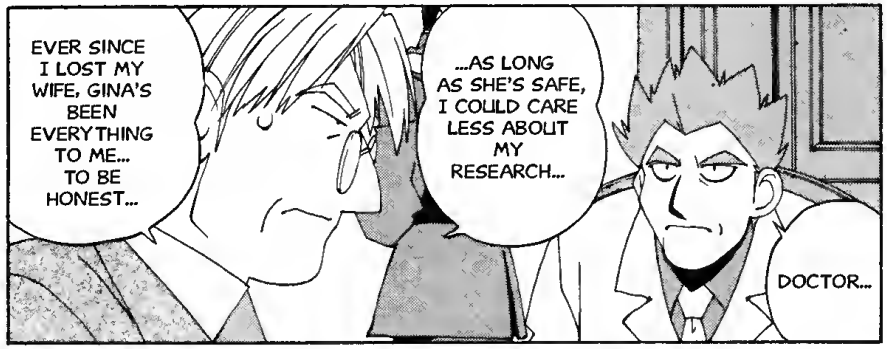
THE CULPRIT HASN'T TAKEN ANY ACTION YET.
WE CAN MAKE A PLAN.

LET'S HEAR WHAT IT IS!
!

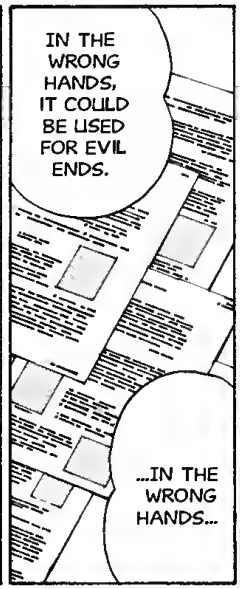
DETECTIVE ONIGAWARA!
LONG TIME NO SEE, NARUTAKI.
WE ALREADY HAVE DOCTOR KITAMER'S MANSION UNDER HEAVY SECURITY.
TONIGHT'S THE PREDICTED DATE. WE'LL CATCH THE CULPRIT WITHOUT A HITCH.
I SEE. CAN I HAVE SOME OF YOUR MEN EXAMINE THE MANSION?
HMPH
WHY?
THE END OF THE LETTER SAYS "WE WILL BOMB YOUR MANSION."
WHICH MEANS A BOMB MIGHT ALREADY BE PLANTED SOMEWHERE IN THIS BUILDING.
NO NEED TO WORRY, NARUTAKI.
ANNA!
I THOUGHT OF THAT, TOO, SO I CALLED IN THE BOMB SQUAD.
THEY SHOULD BE HERE SOON.

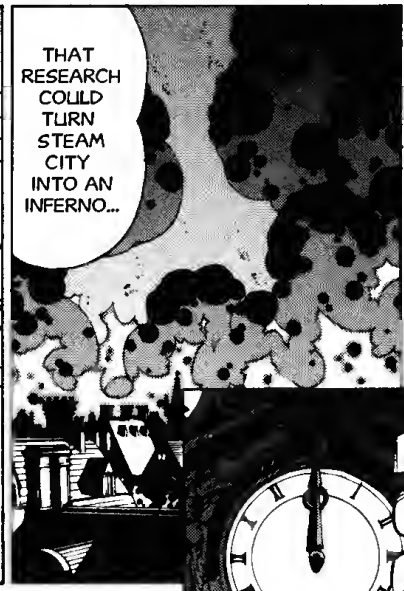

ONCE AGAIN, I'M IMPRESSED, ANNA.
WHICH MEANS I'M *NOT* IMPRESSIVE?
I DIDN'T SAY THAT...
BACK TO THE QUESTION — WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?
WELL...
THIS IS GINA.
HELLO.
HELLO, GINA. ARE YOU WILLING TO COOPERATE ONCE I EXPLAIN WHAT WE'RE UP TO?
SURE!

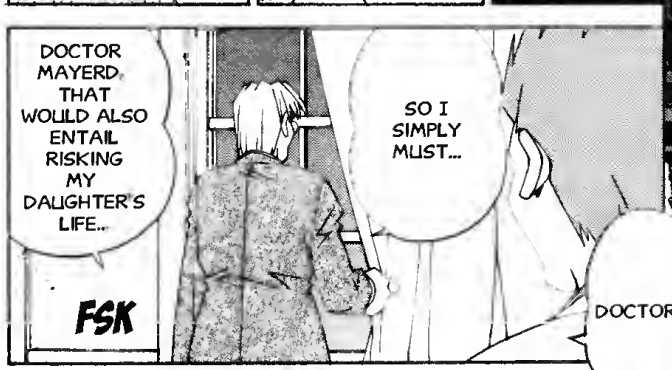

THAT EVENING...
THE NOTE SAID MIDNIGHT ...
IT'S A LITTLE CLICHÉ.
DETECTIVE ONIGAWARA ...
HOW'D IT GO, ANNA?
THERE APPEARS TO BE NO SIGN OF A BOMB.
I'LL HAVE THEM SWEEP THE AREA ONE MORE TIME, JUST TO BE SURE.
HM...


EVER SINCE I LOST MY WIFE, GINA'S BEEN EVERYTHING TO ME... TO BE HONEST...
...AS LONG AS SHE'S SAFE, I COULD CARE LESS ABOUT MY RESEARCH...
DOCTOR...

NO... THAT'S NOT TRUE. OUR RESEARCH IS FOR THE GOOD OF MANKIND.
BUT...

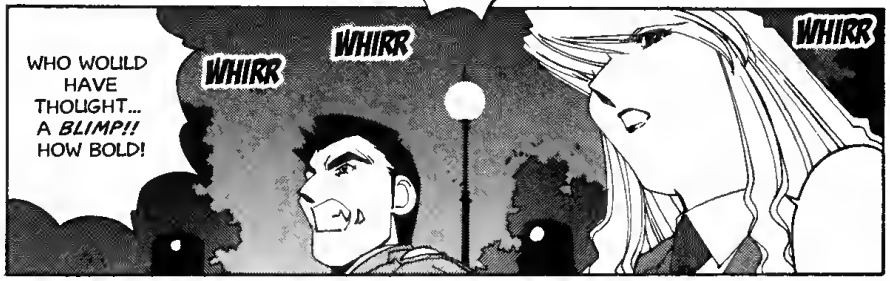

IN THE WRONG HANDS, IT COULD BE USED FOR EVIL ENDS.
...IN THE WRONG HANDS...

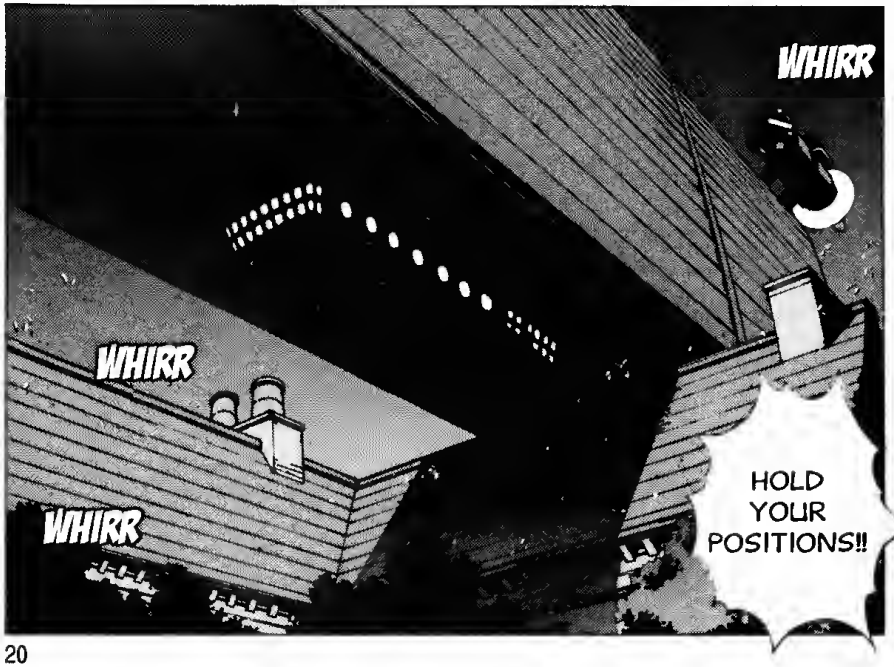

THAT RESEARCH COULD TURN STEAM CITY INTO AN INFERNO...

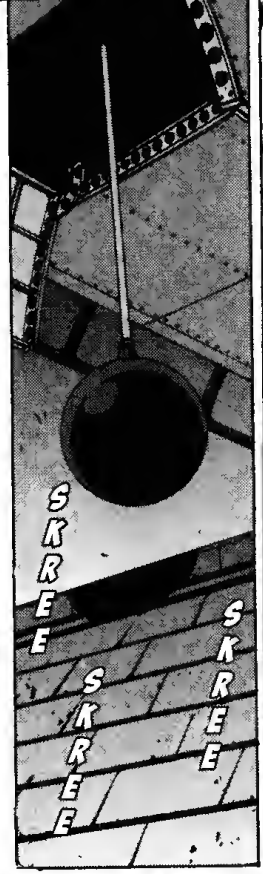

DOCTOR MAYERD, THAT WOULD ALSO ENTAIL RISKING MY DAUGHTER'S LIFE...
SO I SIMPLY MUST...
FSK
DOCTOR...

WHIRR
WHIRR
WHIRR
WHRR
!!
THEY'RE IN THE SKY!!

FICH
CHAK
CHAK
TMP
TMP
IT'S FLYING LOW! IF THE HYDROGEN IGNITES---
DON'T SHOOT!

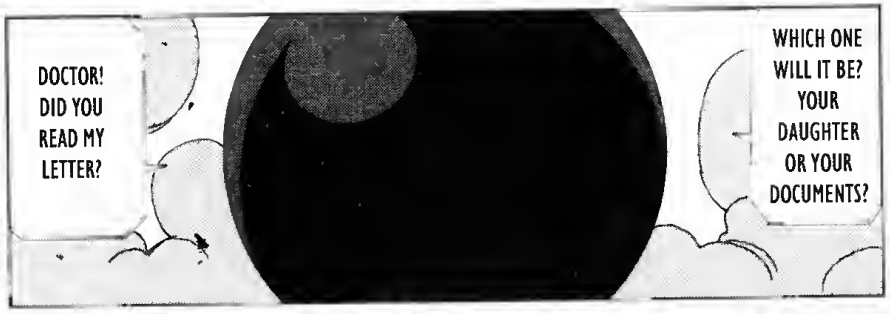

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT... A BLIMP!! HOW BOLD!
WHIRR
WHIRR
WHIRR

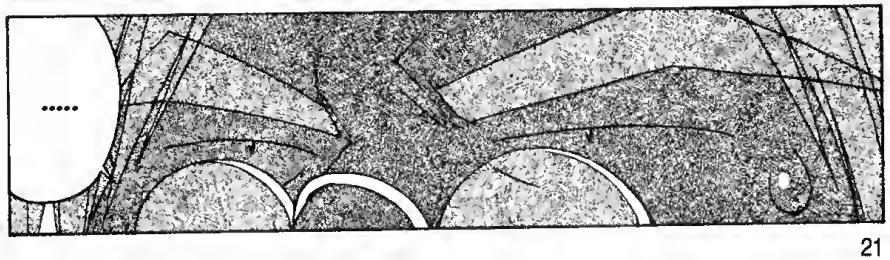

WHIRR
WHIRR
WHIRR
HOLD YOUR POSITIONS!!


SKREE
SKREE
SKREE

KRRSH

!!
VOOM


DOCTOR! DID YOU READ MY LETTER?
WHICH ONE WILL IT BE? YOUR DAUGHTER OR YOUR DOCUMENTS?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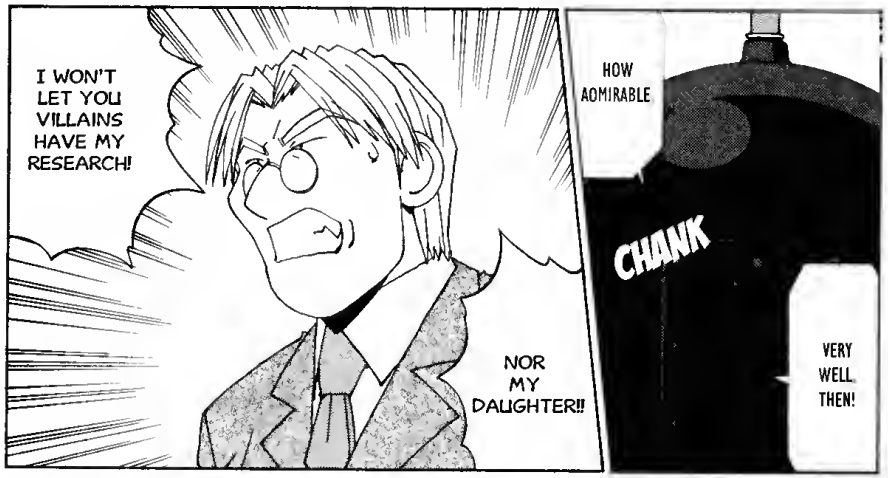
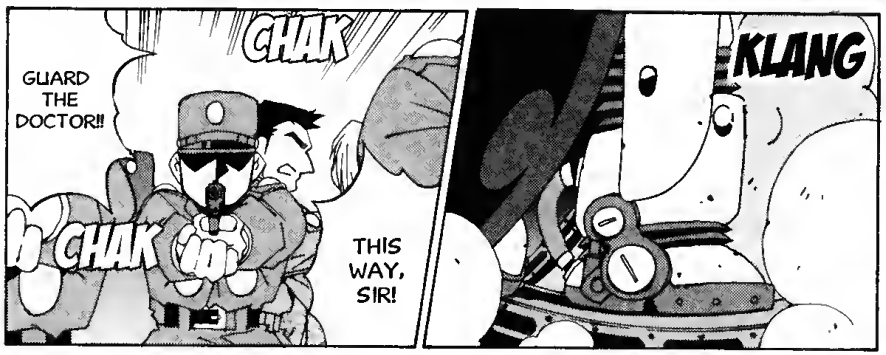
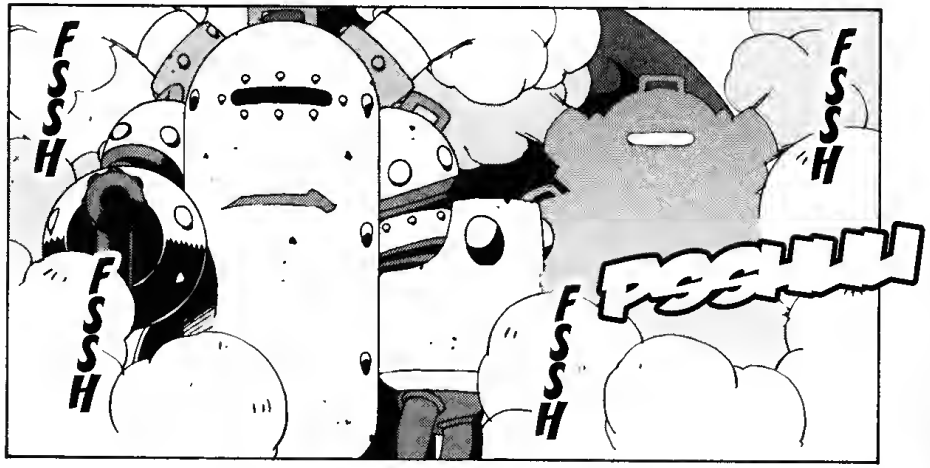
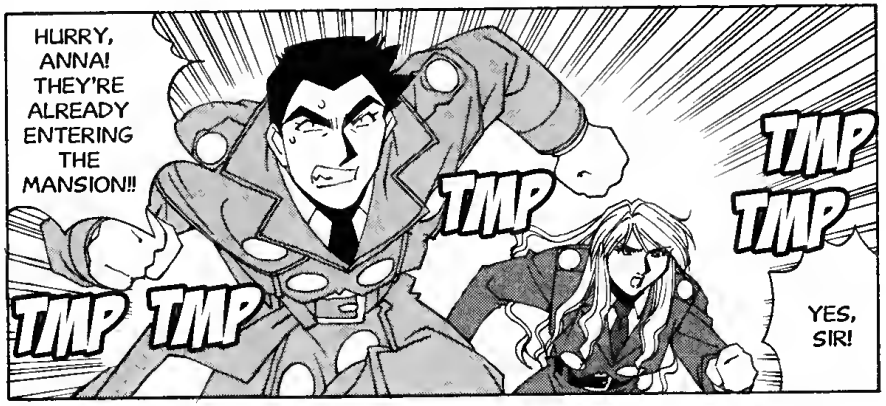
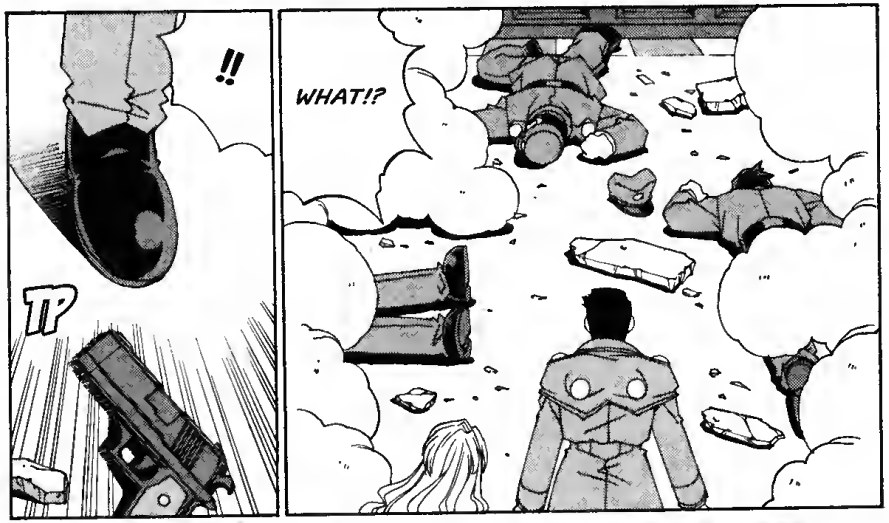
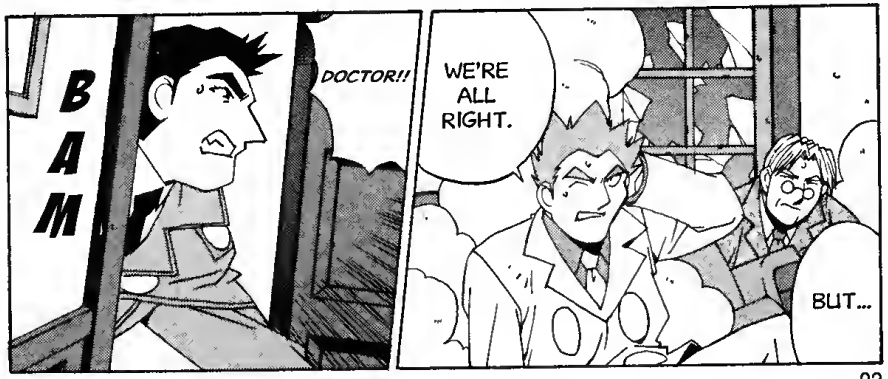

I WON'T LET YOU VILLAINS HAVE MY RESEARCH!
NOR MY DAUGHTER!!
HOW ADMIRABLE
CHANK
VERY WELL, THEN!


GUARD THE DOCTOR!!
CHAK
CHAK
THIS WAY, SIR!
KLANG


FSSH
FSSH
FSSH
FSSH
POSHUU

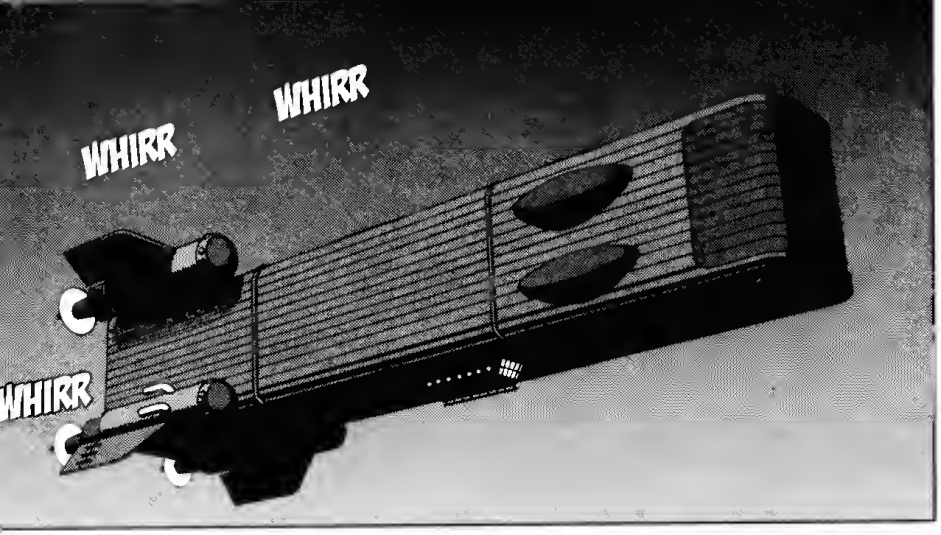

HURRY, ANNA! THEY'RE ALREADY ENTERING THE MANSION!!
TMP
TMP
TMP
TMP
TMP
YES, SIR!


!!
TP
WHAT!?

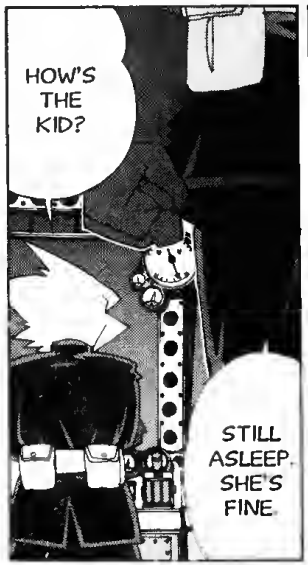

BAM
DOCTOR!!
WE'RE ALL RIGHT.
BUT...

SKREE
SKREE
SKREE
NARUTAKI!
BAM
NARUTAKI...
WHIRR
WHIRR
CONTACT THE AIR FORCE!
TRACK DOWN THAT BLIMP!!
NARUTAKI, ARE YOU...

WHIRR
WHIRR
WHIRR
DETECTIVE ONIGA-WARA ...
!!
DID WE DO THE RIGHT THING?

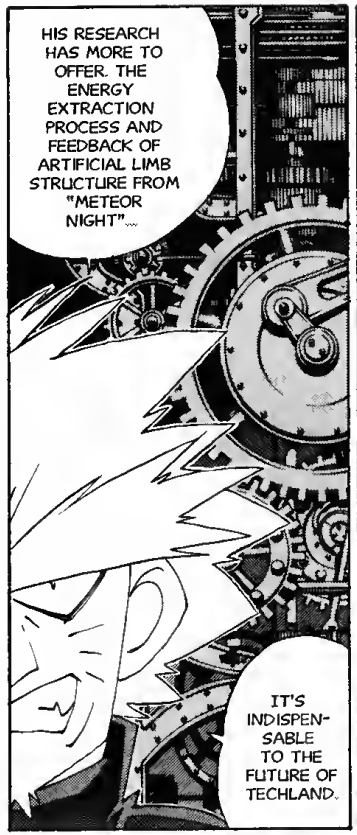

WHIRR
WHIRR
WHIRR

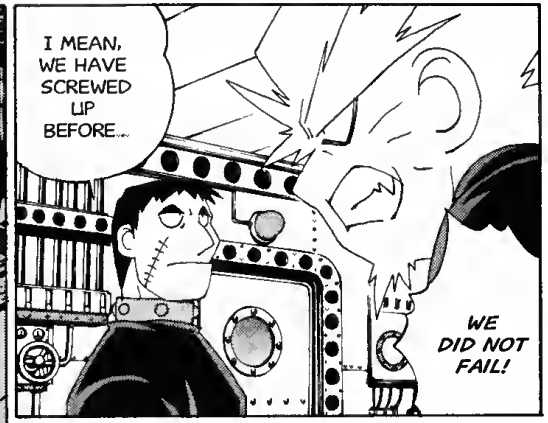
WHIRR
WHIRR


HOW'S THE KID?
STILL ASLEEP. SHE'S FINE.

GOOD.
SHE COULD COME IN HANDY AGAIN IN THE FUTURE.
WE'LL LET HER LIVE.

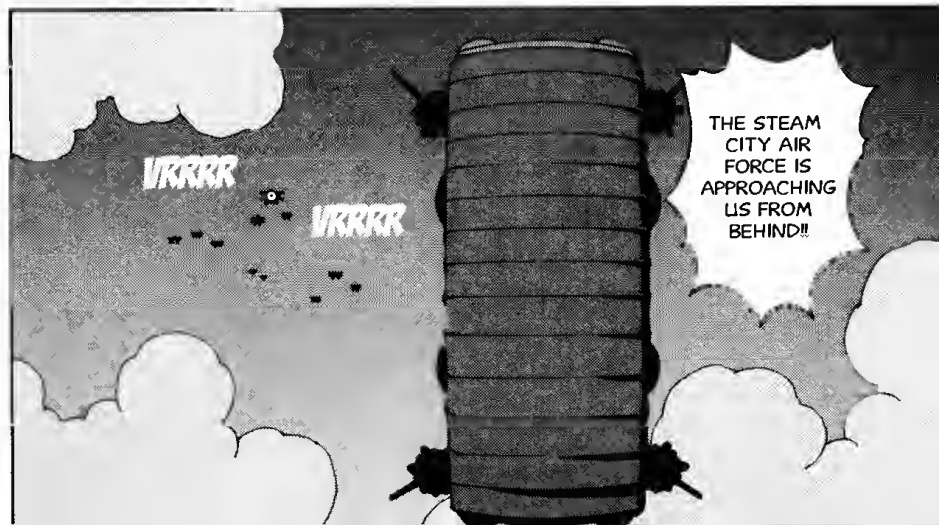
DON'T YOU THINK WE SHOULD JUST...
THAT WOULD BE FOOLISH. WE LET KITAMER LIVE FOR A REASON.


HIS RESEARCH HAS MORE TO OFFER. THE ENERGY EXTRACTION PROCESS AND FEEDBACK OF ARTIFICIAL LIMB STRUCTURE FROM "METEOR NIGHT"...
IT'S INDISPENSABLE TO THE FUTURE OF TECHLAND.

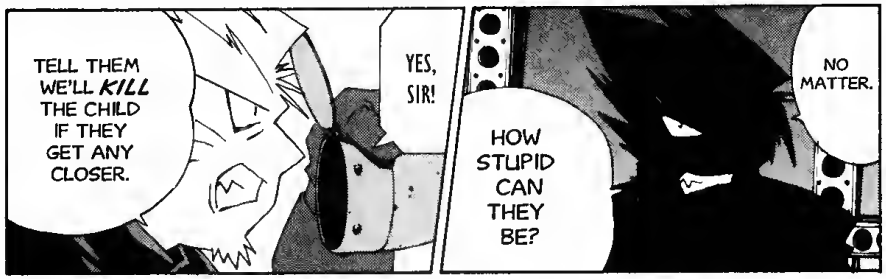

I MEAN, WE HAVE SCREWED UP BEFORE...
WE DID NOT FAIL!

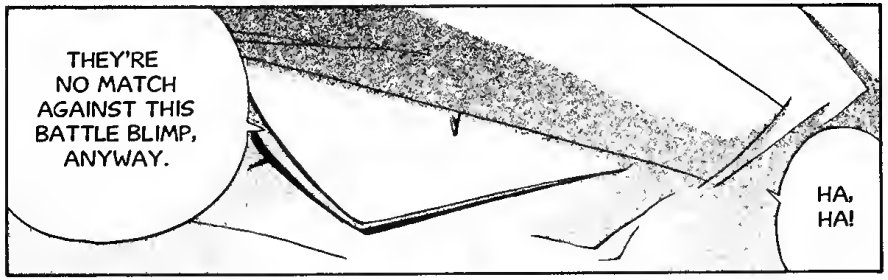
WE'LL GET IT RIGHT THIS TIME.

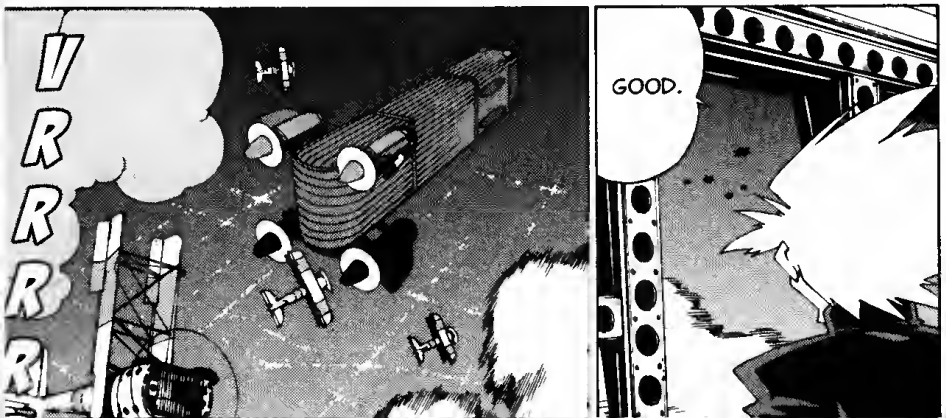
BUT IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO THIS BATTLE BLIMP, I THINK WE'RE IN FOR IT...
I TOLD YOU, WE WON'T FAIL!


VRRRR
VRRRR
THE STEAM CITY AIR FORCE IS APPROACHING US FROM BEHIND!!

VRRRRRR


TELL THEM WE'LL *KILL* THE CHILD IF THEY GET ANY CLOSER.
YES, SIR!
HOW STUPID CAN THEY BE?
NO MATTER.


THEY'RE NO MATCH AGAINST THIS BATTLE BLIMP, ANYWAY.
HA, HA!

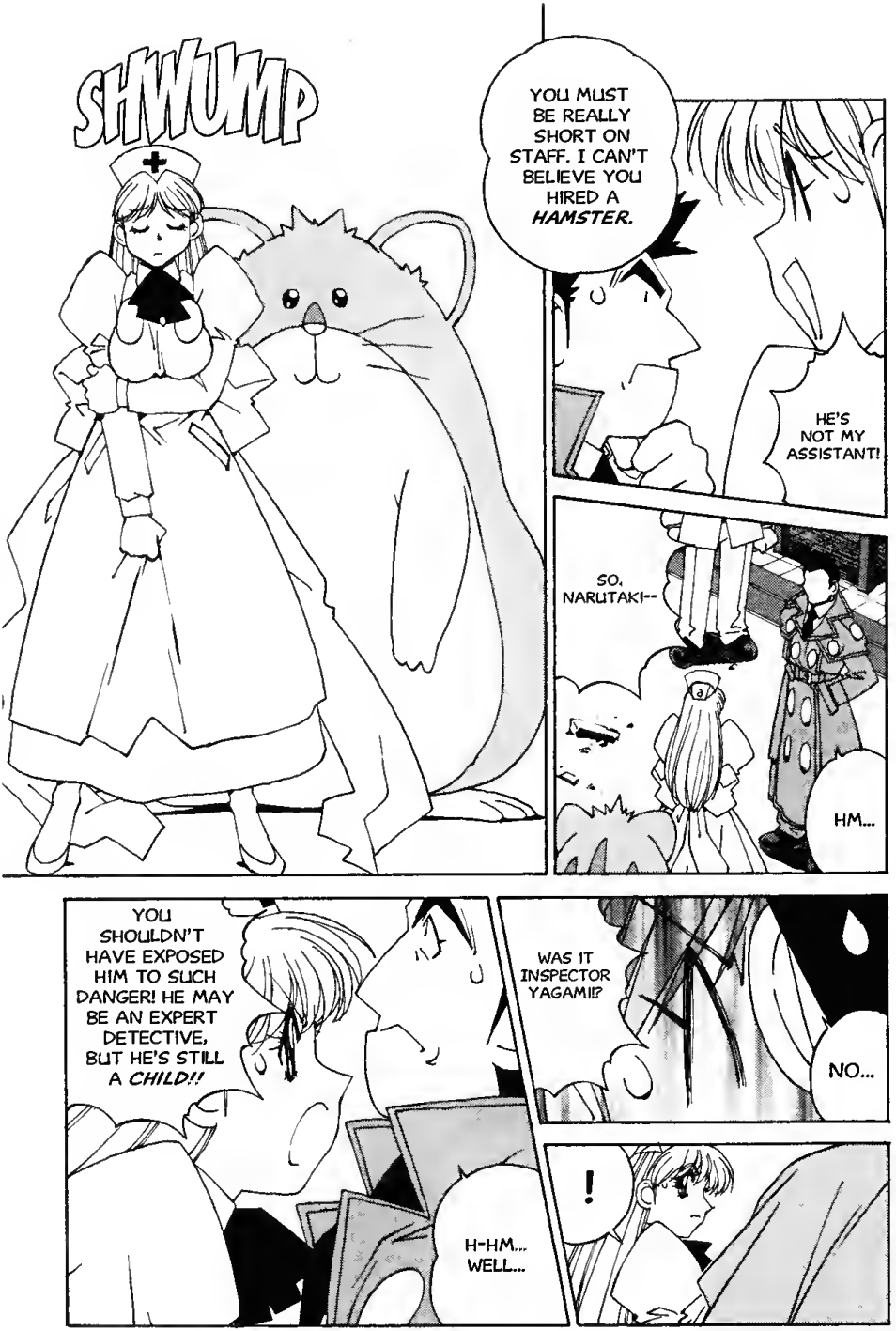

VRRRR
GOOD.

NOTHING CAN STOP US NOW.
NOT EVEN NARU-TAKI!
AT LAST, I GOT TO KILL HIM...
THAT BRAT!

THAT'S RIGHT. THE BOY DETECTIVE NARUTAKI IS *DEAD!!*
WHIRR
WHIRR
WHIRR
HA HA HA HA HA!

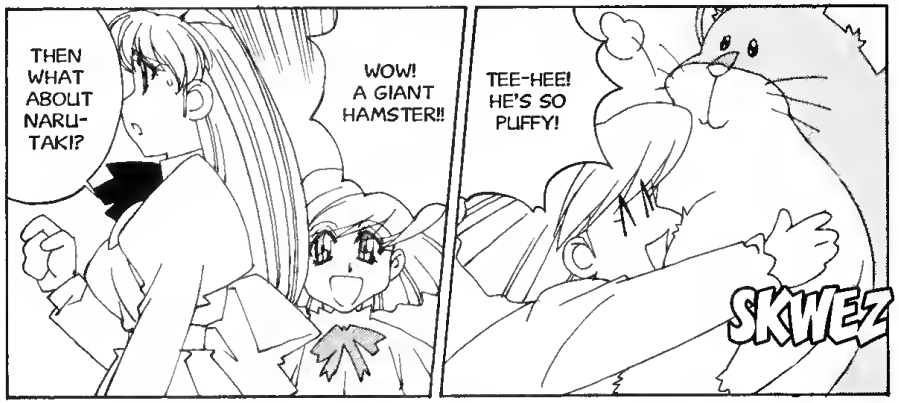
KRRSH
THAT CAN'T BE!!
WH-WHAT!? NARUTAKI!?
DETECTIVE ONIGAWARA JUST CALLED IN...
I NEED TO GO!
SLAM
KREECH
VRRN
!
SHP

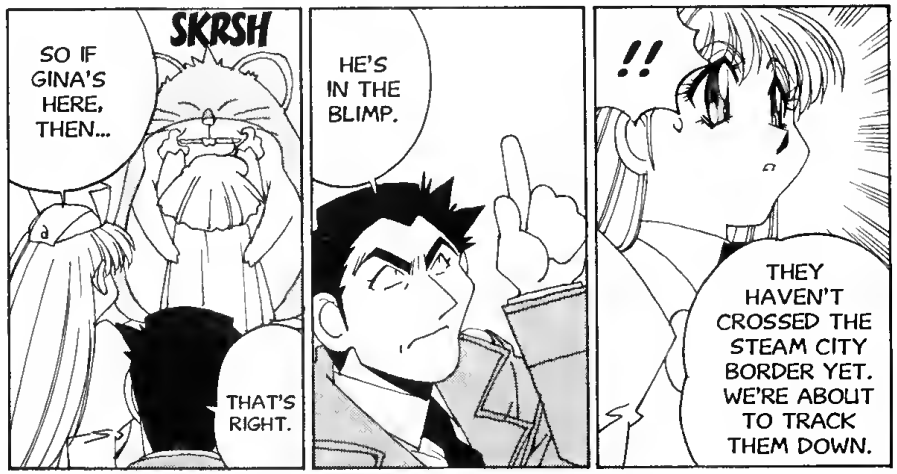
VRRR
TENG SHING!!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE!?
VR
VR
.....
OH, WELL... IT'S TOO LATE TO TAKE YOU BACK.
SIGH...
VRRR
VRM
YOU'D BETTER HOLD ON TIGHT, OR YOU MIGHT GET BLOWN OUT!!
.....
WHAT... IS THAT?


SHWUMP
YOU MUST BE REALLY SHORT ON STAFF. I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU HIRED A HAMSTER.
HE'S NOT MY ASSISTANT!
SO, NARUTAKI--
HM...
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE EXPOSED HIM TO SUCH DANGER! HE MAY BE AN EXPERT DETECTIVE, BUT HE'S STILL A CHILD!!
WAS IT INSPECTOR YAGAMI!?
NO...
H-HM... WELL...
!

URK
PLIP
PLIP
WH-WHAT IS THAT!? IS THAT NARUTAKI!?!
NO... THAT'S...
A DOLL. THAT WAS NARU-TAKI'S IDEA.
IT'S FILLED WITH RED LIQUID...
FWUP

THAT'S JUST GROSS.
SOMETIMES I DON'T GET HIM...

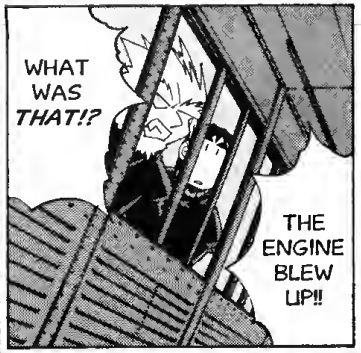

THEN WHAT ABOUT NARU-TAKI?
WOW! A GIANT HAMSTER!!
TEE-HEE! HE'S SO PUFFY!
SKWEZ

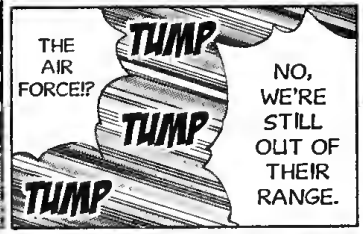

SKRSH
SO IF GINA'S HERE, THEN...
THAT'S RIGHT.
HE'S IN THE BLIMP.
!!
THEY HAVEN'T CROSSED THE STEAM CITY BORDER YET. WE'RE ABOUT TO TRACK THEM DOWN.

WHIRR
WHIRR

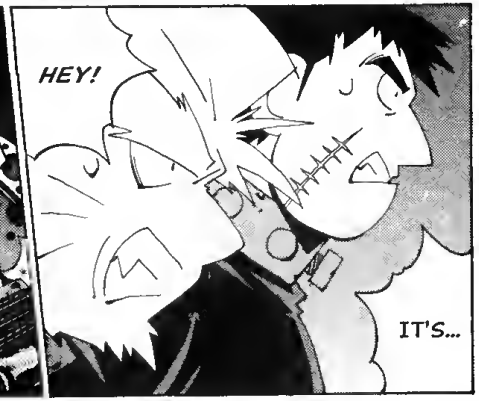
BOOM

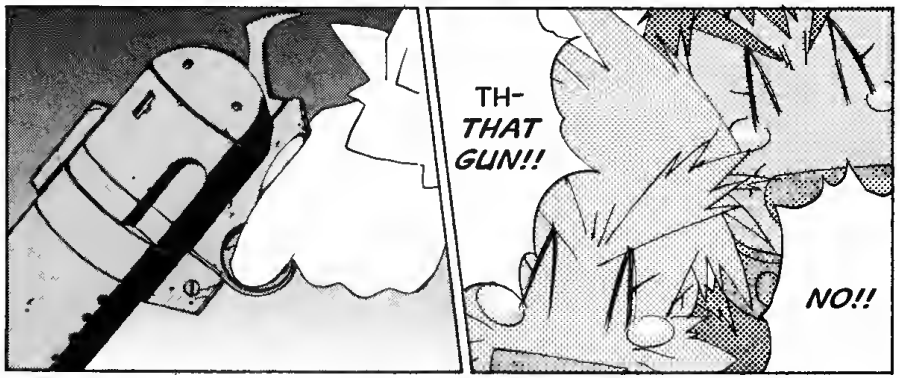
BUWHAM


WHAT WAS THAT!?
THE ENGINE BLEW UP!!

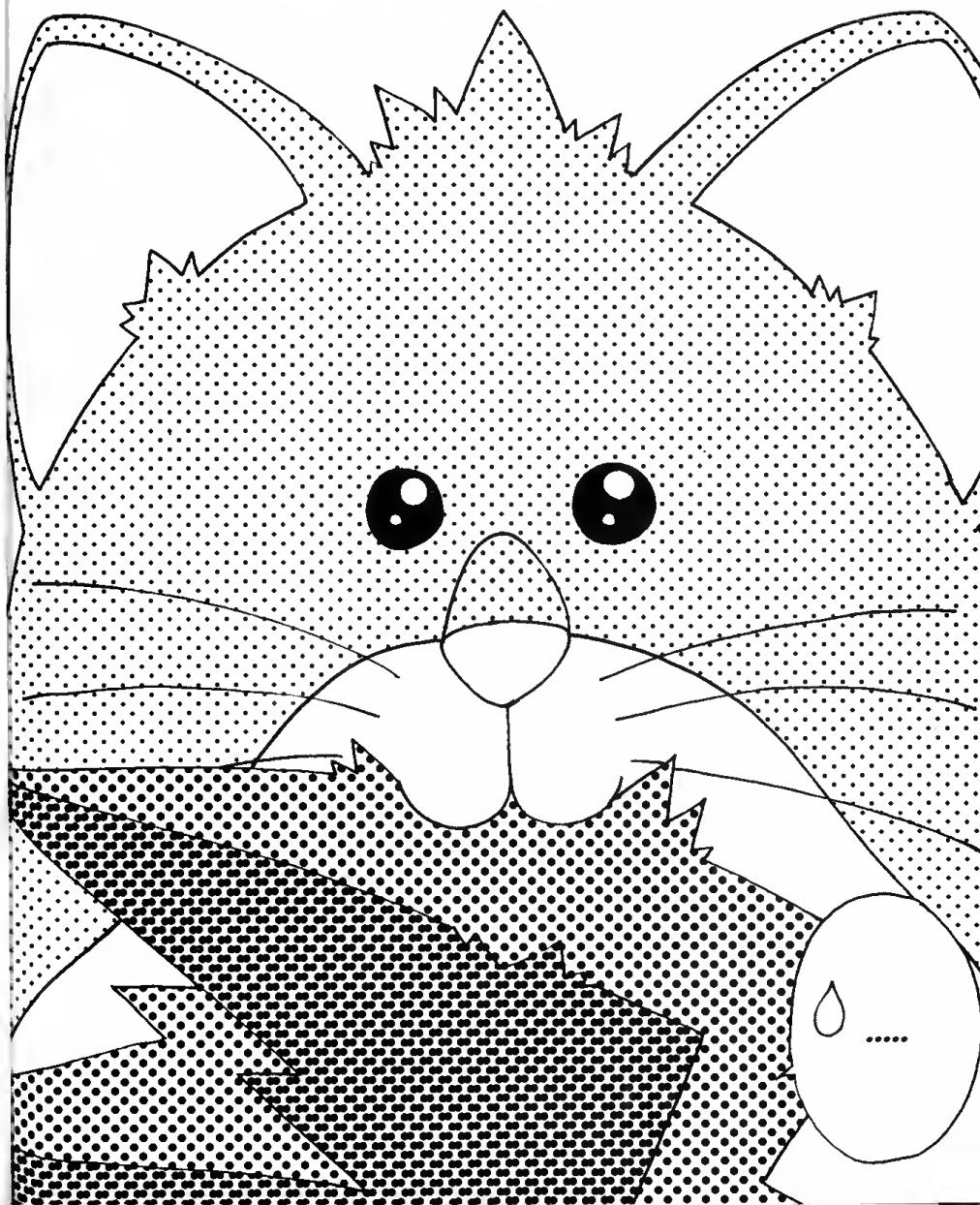

THE AIR FORCE!?
TUMP
TUMP
TUMP
NO, WE'RE STILL OUT OF THEIR RANGE.

THIS IS BAD.
OOGH
GWO
OO


HEY!
IT'S...



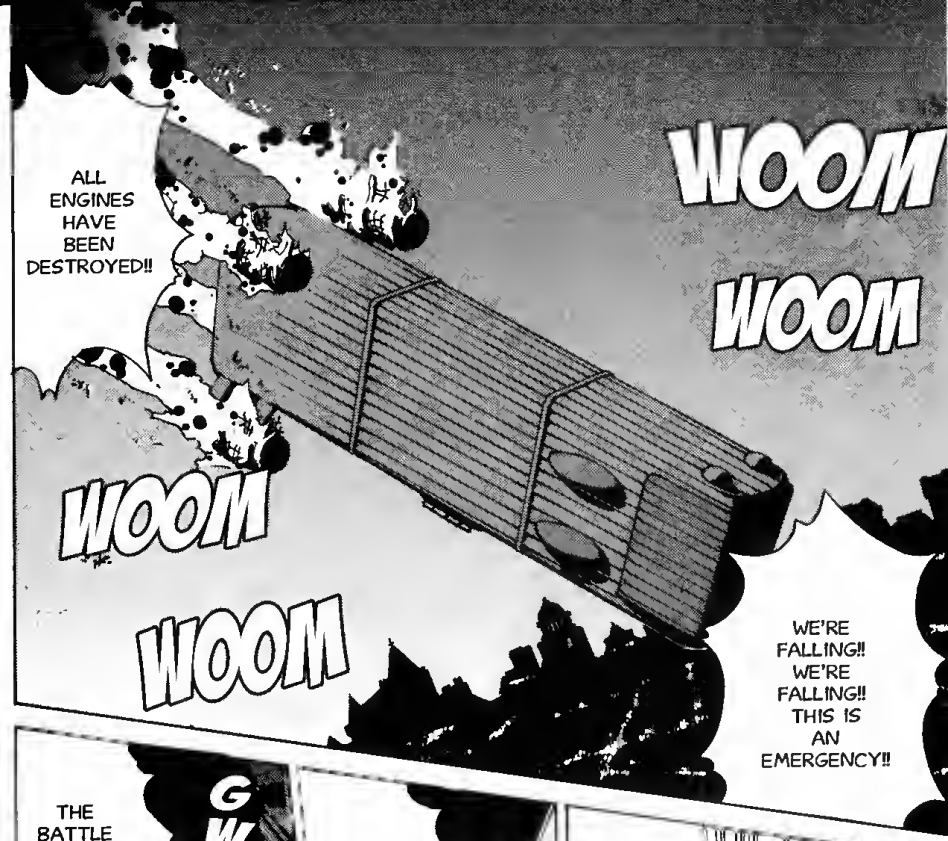
CASE TWENTY-FOUR, PART 2
THE BIG CHASE!! TENG SHING!! RESCUE NARUTAKI!?



OH, WELL...
GWOO
YOU FOUND ME!
KRAKL

Y-YOU'RE...
...NARU-TAKI!?
THAT'S RIGHT!
OOO
OGH
GINA'S BACK AT THE DOCTOR'S MANSION.
DON'T YOU KNOW WHEN TO STOP!?
STUPID BRAT!
I FEEL THE SAME WAY.

BO
OM


ALL ENGINES HAVE BEEN DESTROYED!!
WOOM
WOOM
WOOM
WOOM
WE'RE FALLING!! WE'RE FALLING!! THIS IS AN EMERGENCY!!

THE BATTLE BLIMP IS FALLING!!
GWOOOGH
OO
NARUTAK!!!
WE'RE ALL GOING TO DIE-- EVEN YOU!!
LET'S ABANDON SHIP! IT'S TOO DANGEROUS!!
YES?
DON'T YOU CARE ABOUT YOUR OWN LIFE!?

NOW THAT I KNOW IT WAS YOU TWO FROM TECHLAND WHO WERE BEHIND THIS...
URK!
BRR
DAMN! COME ON, CARLOS!
TMP
LET'S GO!!
IF THIS SHIP CRASHES, INNOCENT STEAM CITY CITIZENS DIE, NARUTAKI!
DON'T YOU CARE!?
GWOO
OOOO
.....
...I'LL SHOW NO MERCY.

I HAVE IT ALL UNDER CONTROL.
GWOOGH
GWOO

PEE-YOO
PEE-YOO
PEE-YOO
THE BLIMP'S GOING TO CRASH!!
THE RESI-DENTS!?
THEY'VE BEEN EVACUATED!
GOOD.
NARUTAKI, EVEN IF YOU GUIDE THE BLIMP TO CRASH INTO AN ABANDONED AREA...
WHAT ABOUT YOU?

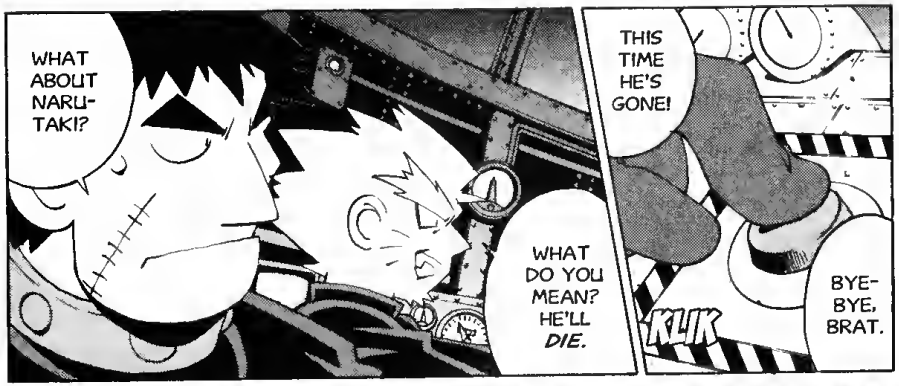
VRROOOM

NARUTAKI, BE CAREFUL...
.....

RRR
RRRRRRRN

GWOOOGH
GWOO
ALL RIGHT, WE'RE READY TO ABANDON SHIP!
LET'S GO!!
ATTENTION ALL CREW, BAIL OUT WITH YOUR PARACHUTES!
CHK
WE'LL SEE YOU BACK IN TECH-LAND!!

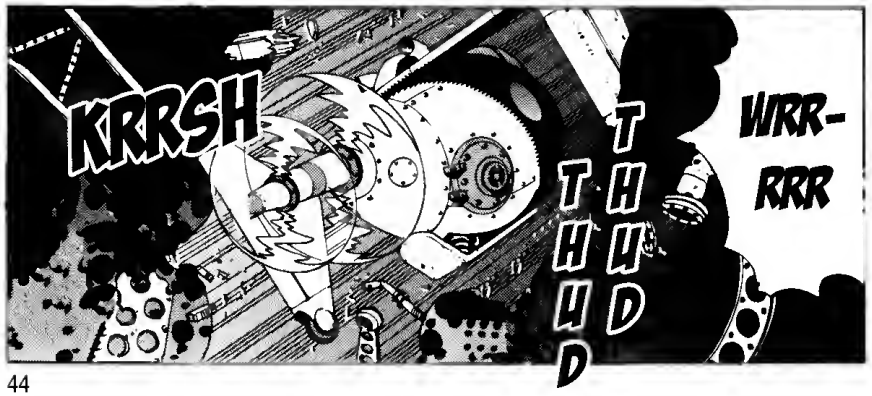
FP
FP
FP
GWOOGH


WHAT ABOUT NARU-TAKI?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? HE'LL DIE.
THIS TIME HE'S GONE!
KLIK
BYE-BYE, BRAT.

FASH

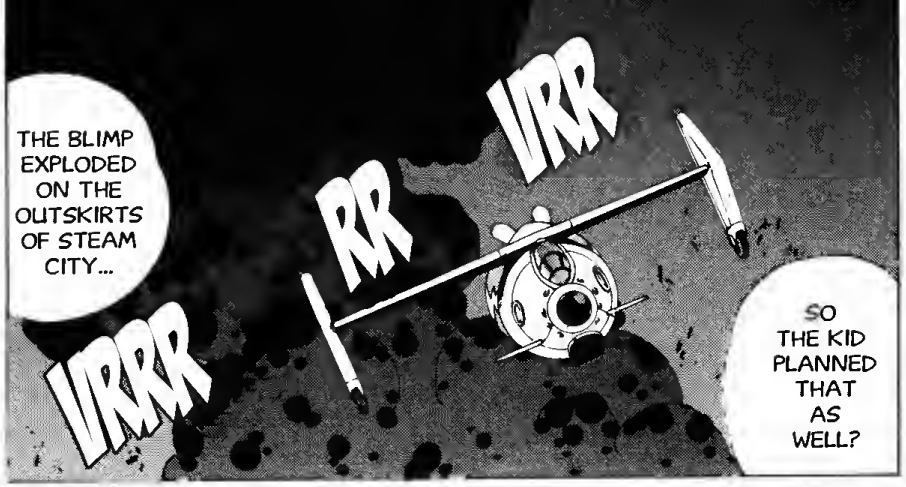
OOM
FO

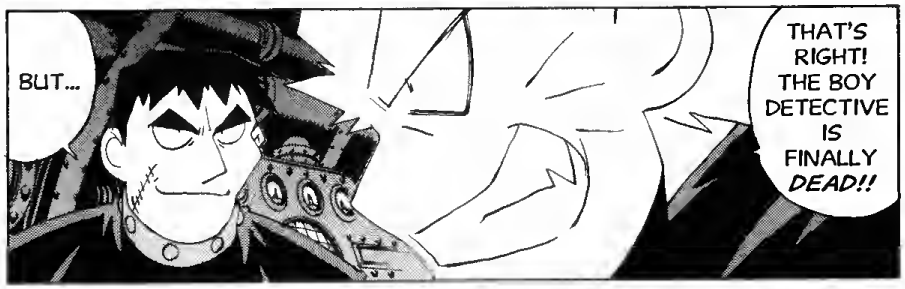
KA-
BOOOOM

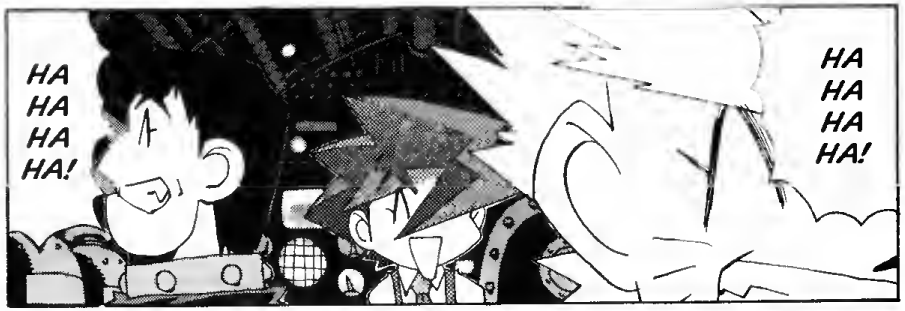

KRRSH
THUD
THUD
THUD
WIRR-
RRR

I-IT BLEW UP!?
GWO
OO
OGH
PEE-YOO
PEE-YOO
HURRY!

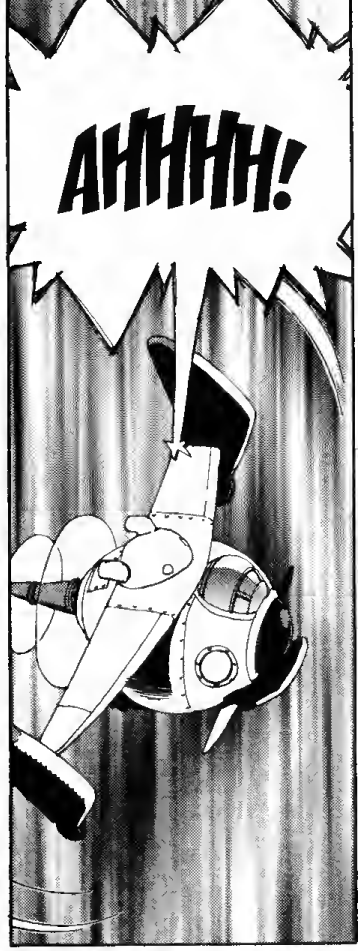
NARU-TAKI!!


THE BLIMP EXPLODED ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF STEAM CITY...
VRRR
RR
VRR
SO THE KID PLANNED THAT AS WELL?

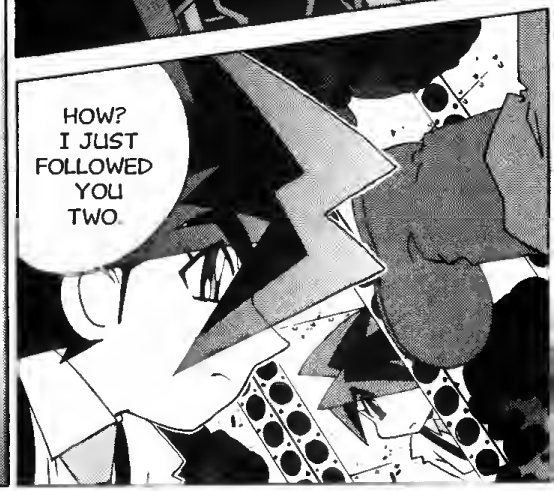

BUT...
THAT'S RIGHT! THE BOY DETECTIVE IS FINALLY *DEAD!!*


HA HA HA HA!
HA HA HA HA!

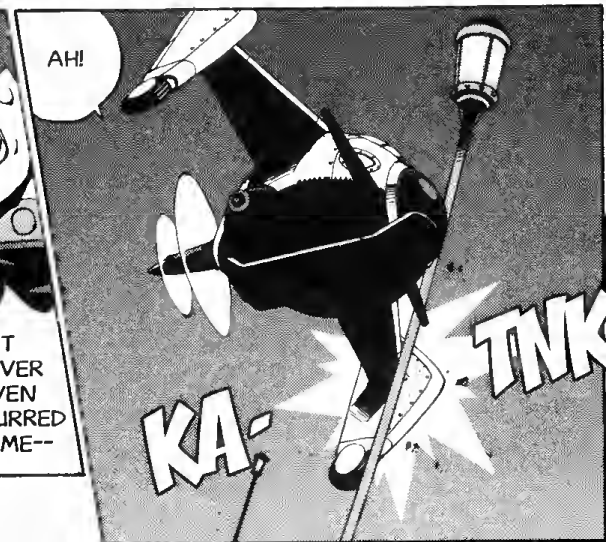
HA...
HA...


AHHHH!

WH- WH- WHAT THE--
NARU-TAKI! HOW DID YOU...


HOW? I JUST FOLLOWED YOU TWO.

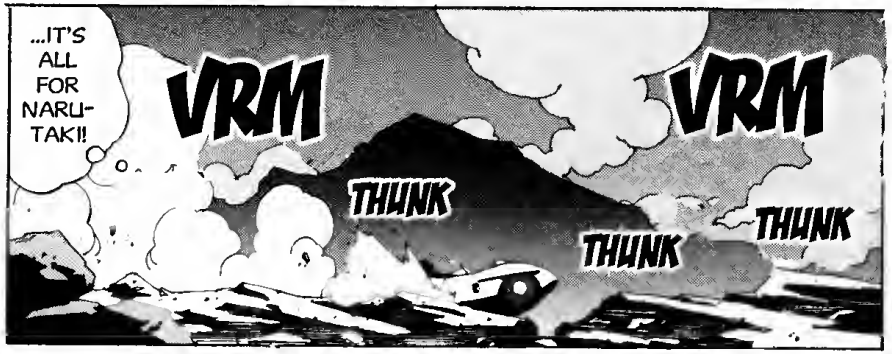
OH, NO! WE NEVER LOOKED BACK!!
IT NEVER EVEN OCCURRED TO ME--


AH!
KA-
-TNK

THE WING!!
GWOOOOOOOH
THAT WAS A STEAM CITY BORDER LAMP...
WE'RE OUTSIDE THE CITY?
ARRGH! WE'RE FALLING!!
VWEEEEE
MOO
THIS TIME, WE'RE REALLY GONNA CRASH!
THERE THEY ARE.
BUT WE CAN'T GET THERE BY CAR.
VRRRRR
NARUTAKI CONTACTED US FROM THERE.

FWOOM
VRRRRRR
WHMP
L....
LING LING?
HA, HA.
KRRSH
KRR

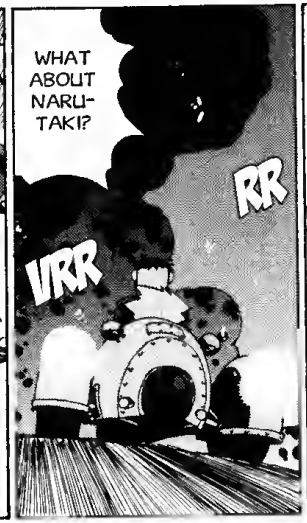
KLANG
KLANG
KLAK
KLAK
KRAK
AWW-WWW!
KRR
KRRRR
THUNK
THERE GOES THE SUSPENSION. THE TIRES ARE FINISHED. THE ACCESSORIES ARE THRASHED, AND THE BODY'S SCRATCHED UP... BUT...


...IT'S ALL FOR NARU-TAKI!
VRM
VRM
THUNK
THUNK
THUNK

YAA-AAH!
KRAK
TNK
RSH
WE-RE CRASH-ING!
TNK
TUNK
TNK
KRSH
BU-
WHAM

SO WHAT? WE'RE STILL ALL RIGHT.
VRM
VRRRRR
WE'VE GOT SOMEONE WAITING FOR US AT THE LIGHTHOUSE! WE'LL SHOW YOU SOME TECHLAND SPIRIT!!

DO YOU HAVE THE DOCTOR'S DOCU-MENTS?
YEAH, RIGHT HERE.


WHAT ABOUT NARU-TAKI?
RR
VRR

WELL, HE'S NOT FOLLOW-ING US!
HAS HE FINALLY GIVEN UP? SO HE REALLY IS A KID.

THE LIGHT-HOUSE!!

THUMP
!!
NA-
NARU-
TAKI!
THIS TIME YOU WON'T GET AWAY!!
GOT IT!
GET RID OF HIM!!
FO
OSH
FIP

TP
FOOSH
AND THAT!
FOOSH
TAKE THIS!
AND THIS!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, CARLOS!? STOP HORSING AROUND!!
I'M NOT!
THIS BRAT'S QUICK!!
CHK
AH!!
BUT I'M UN-ARMED!!
YEAH.
CHAK

BLAMM
ARR-RGH!
FWUD
KRAK
NO FAIR!
THAT BRAT!!
SKWEE SKWEE SKWEE

THAT BRAT...
...IS TERRIFYING!!
GRR!
I WON'T LET YOU GET AWAY!
YOU CAN'T...
TMP
... CATCH US!!
GEEZ.
HMMM
HA HA HA! WE'LL SEE.
WOOM

TUMP
HUF
TUMP
HUF
TMP
TMP
HUF
YES!
WE'RE ALMOST THERE!!
TUMP
TUMP
TUMP
TUMP
TUMP
H-HE'S FAST!
TUMP
WHOOSH
!!
TUMP
TUMP
TUMP
TUMP
AH!!
BLAMM
GIVE IT UP!
KLAMP
THESE HANDCUFFS ARE USELESS! YOU STILL CAN'T CATCH US!!
BYE-BYE!
FWIMP
HM?

WHAT...
WHAT IS THAT?

T...
TENG SHING?
A... HAM-STER?
PFF PFF
BUT IT'S SO BIG...

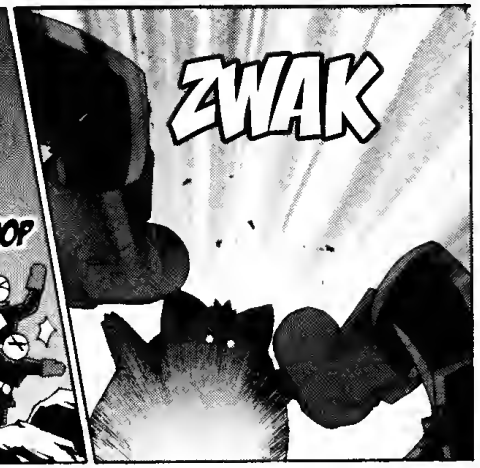
WAM
AH!

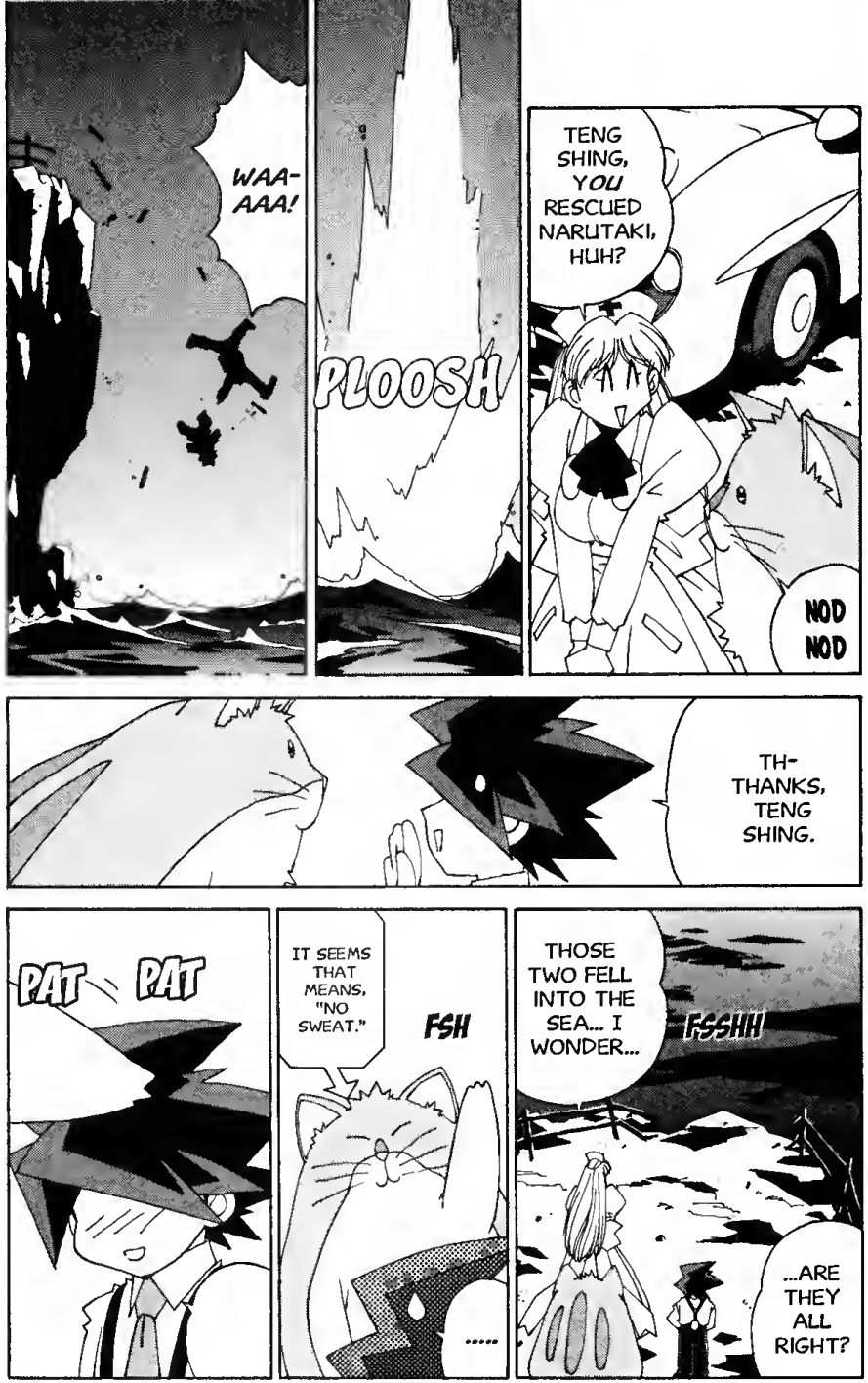
YAA!
BOOT

WAK
WAK
WAK

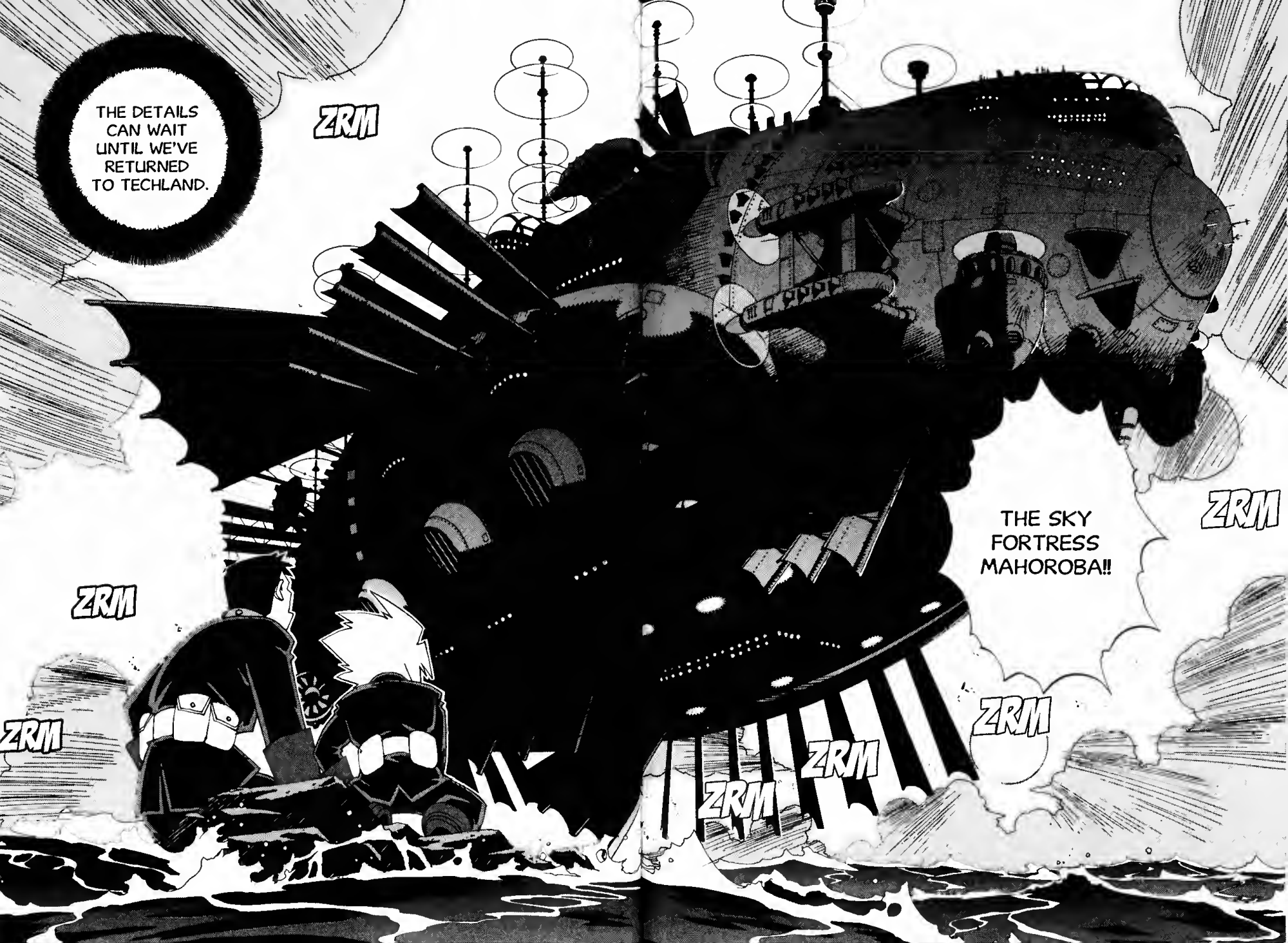
FOOP FOOP

TENG SHING ...
FOOP
FOOP
FOOP


ZWAK


WAA-AAA!
PLOOSH
TENG SHING, YOU RESCUED NARUTAKI, HUH?
NOD NOD
TH-THANKS, TENG SHING.
PAT PAT
IT SEEMS THAT MEANS, "NO SWEAT."
FSH
.....
THOSE TWO FELL INTO THE SEA... I WONDER...
FSSHH
...ARE THEY ALL RIGHT?

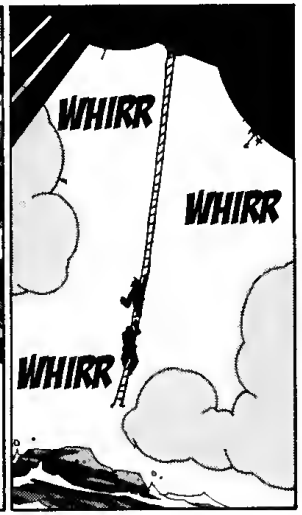
THAT CURSED HAMSTER.
FSSHH
SPSSH
WE'RE GOING TO BE IN BIG TROUBLE ONCE WE GET BACK TO TECHLAND.
WELL, AT LEAST WE'VE GOT KITAMER'S RESEARCH DOCU-MENTS...
SO...
BUT THE BATTLE BLIMP WAS DESTROYED ...
IT SEEMS YOU HAVE FAILED ONCE AGAIN!!
URK
!!
ZRM ZRM ZRM ZRM
SSSH
FSSHH
AH!!
TH-THAT'S --
ZRM ZRM ZRM

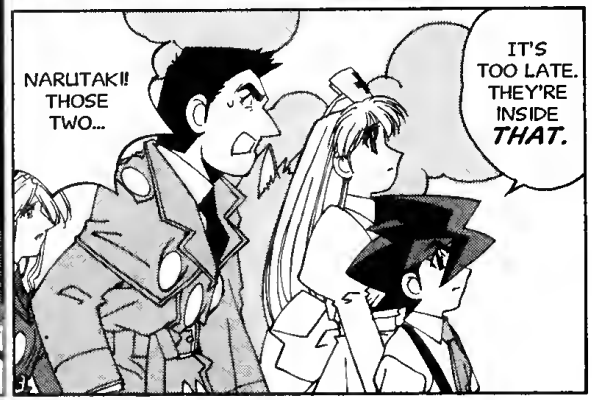

THE DETAILS CAN WAIT UNTIL WE'VE RETURNED TO TECHLAND.
ZRM
THE SKY FORTRESS MAHOROBA!!
ZRM
ZRM
ZRM
ZRM
ZRM
ZRM

WE'LL SEE WHAT THE LITTLE MASTER HAS TO SAY ABOUT THIS...

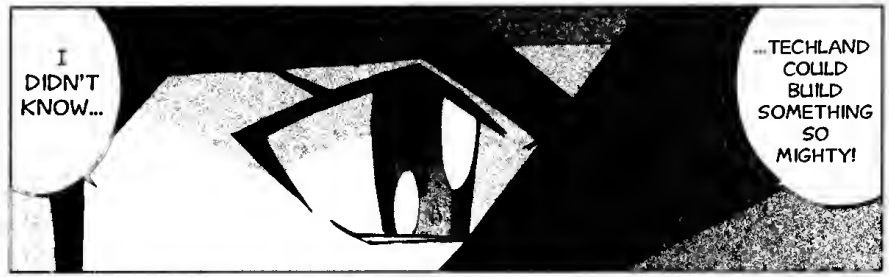
I CAN'T MAKE ANY GUARANTEES TO YOU.
SO SORRY, WOLF AND CARLOS.

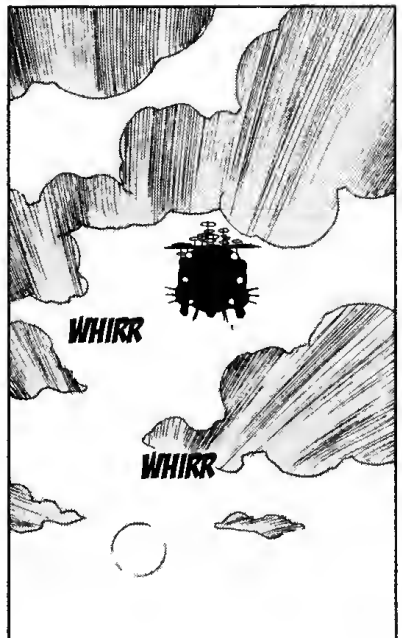
YEAH, DRAG. WE KNOW. JUST GET US OUT OF HERE.
I'M SCARED.


WHIRR
WHIRR
WHIRR

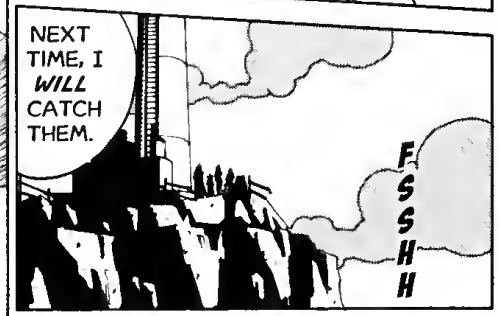

NARUTAK!! THOSE TWO...
IT'S TOO LATE. THEY'RE INSIDE THAT.

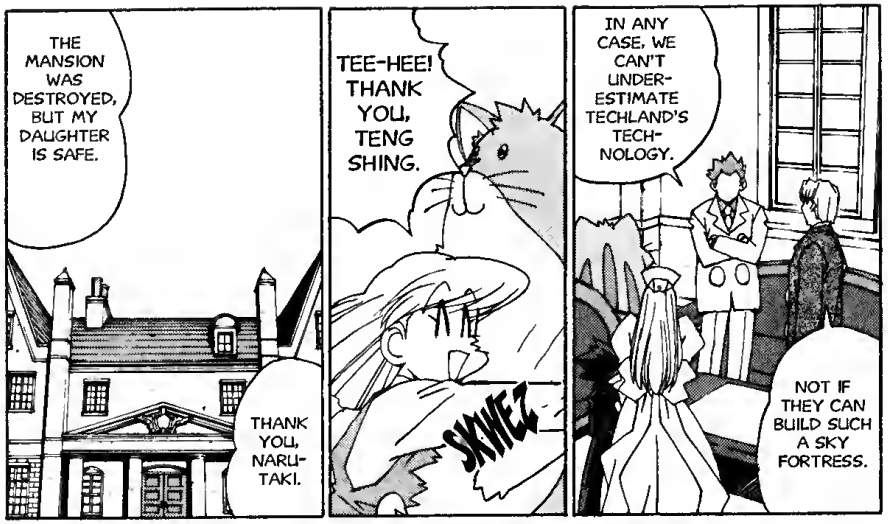
WHIRR
WHIRR


I DIDN'T KNOW...
...TECHLAND COULD BUILD SOMETHING SO MIGHTY!

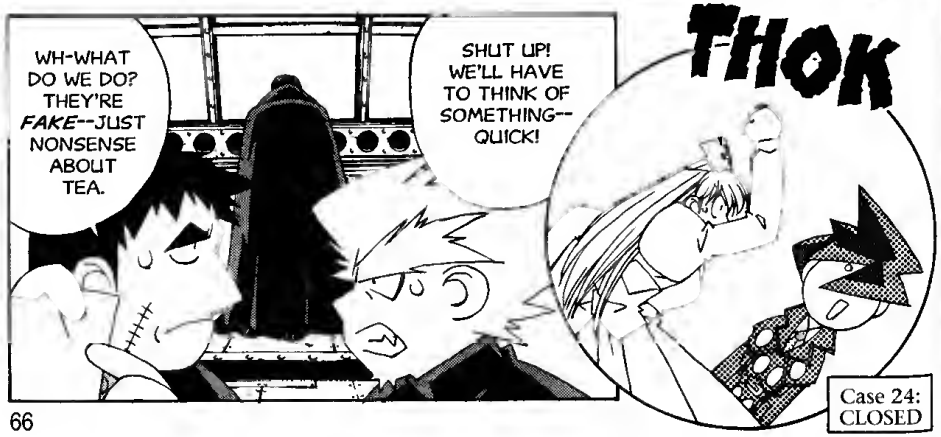

WHIRR
WHIRR

NARUTAKI, DON'T BE DISAPPOINTED. WE'LL HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE...
YES.


NEXT TIME, I WILL CATCH THEM.
FSSHH


THE MANSION WAS DESTROYED, BUT MY DAUGHTER IS SAFE.
THANK YOU, NARUTAKI.
TEE-HEE! THANK YOU, TENG SHING.
SKWEZ
IN ANY CASE, WE CAN'T UNDER-ESTIMATE TECHLAND'S TECH-NOLOGY.
NOT IF THEY CAN BUILD SUCH A SKY FORTRESS.

SAY, NARUTAKI, WHAT ABOUT DOCTOR KITAMER'S RESEARCH DOCUMENTS?
IT'S THE OLDEST TRICK IN THE BOOK. I SWITCHED THEM WITH YOUR TEA RECIPES. THE REAL DOCUMENTS ARE RIGHT HERE.


WH-WHAT DO WE DO? THEY'RE *FAKE*--JUST NONSENSE ABOUT TEA.
SHUT UP! WE'LL HAVE TO THINK OF SOMETHING--QUICK!
THOK
Case 24: CLOSED

KRRSSH

BRM BRM BRM
FSSHH

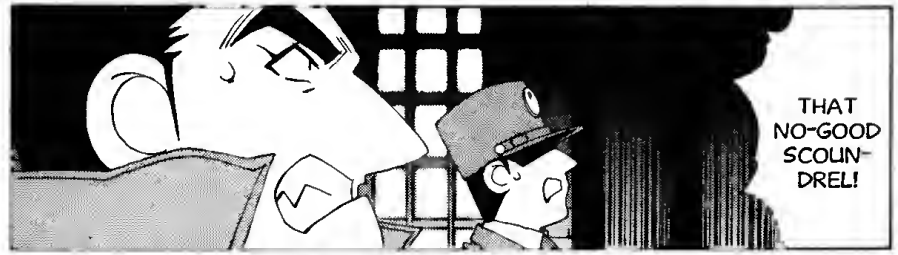
DAMN IT!
THAT BRAT!!

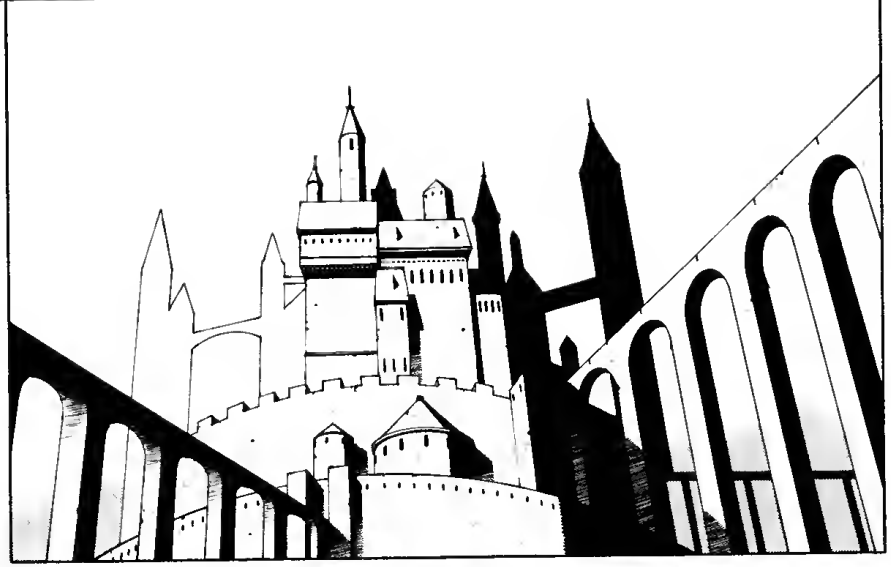
HA HA HA HA HA HA!

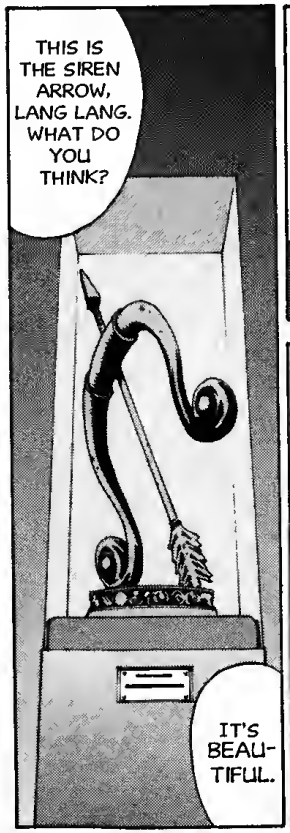
LOOKS LIKE I WIN AGAIN, STEAM POLICE!!

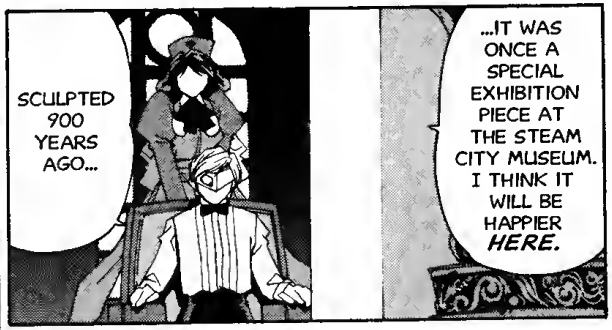
AS YOU CAN SEE, THE SIREN ARROW IS NOW MINE!!
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? THERE'S NOTHING IN THIS WORLD I CANNOT STEAL! I AM THE PHANTOM THIEF LE BREAD!! NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME!!

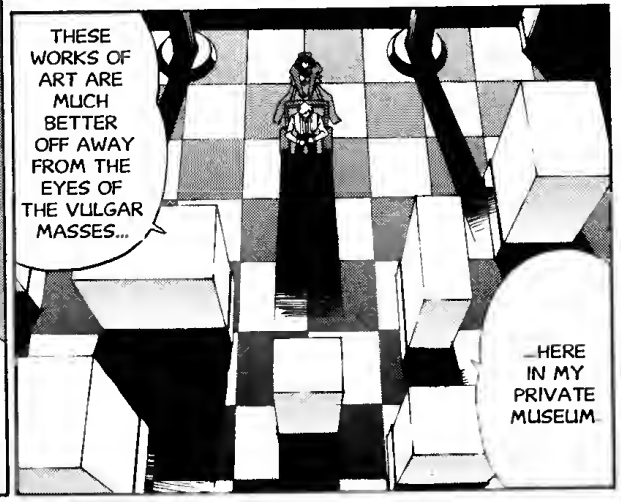
CASE TWENTY-FIVE, PART 1
THE PHANTOM THIEF AND THE GIRL

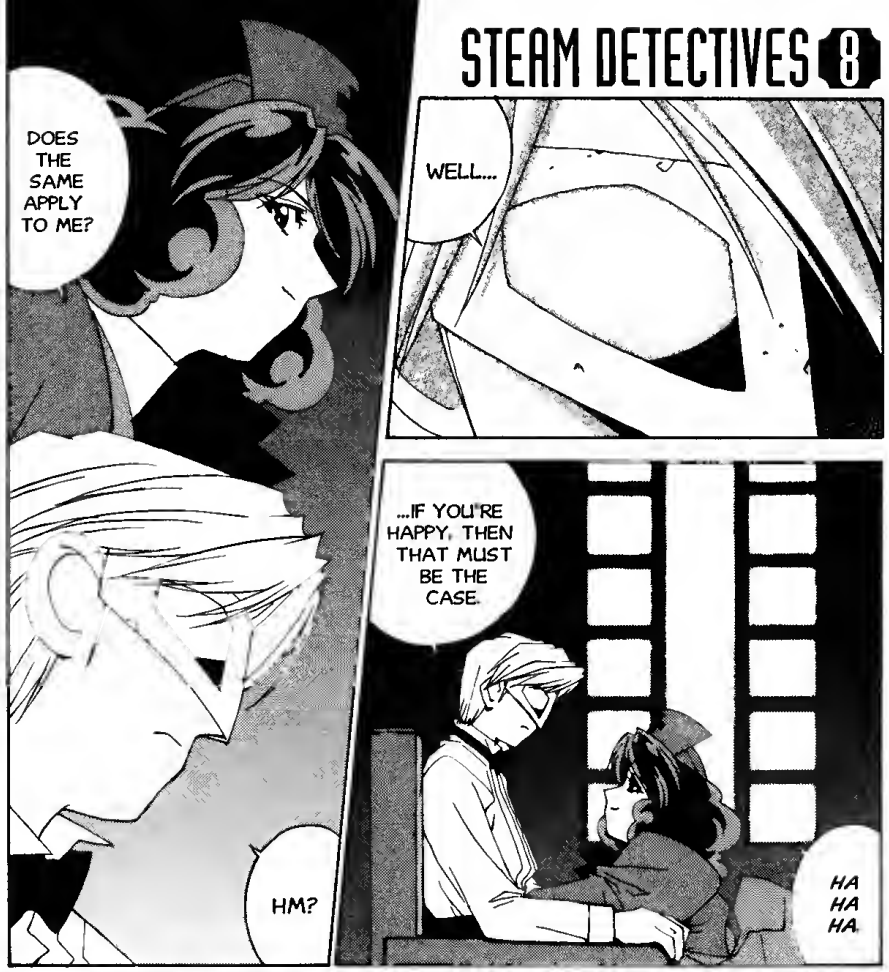


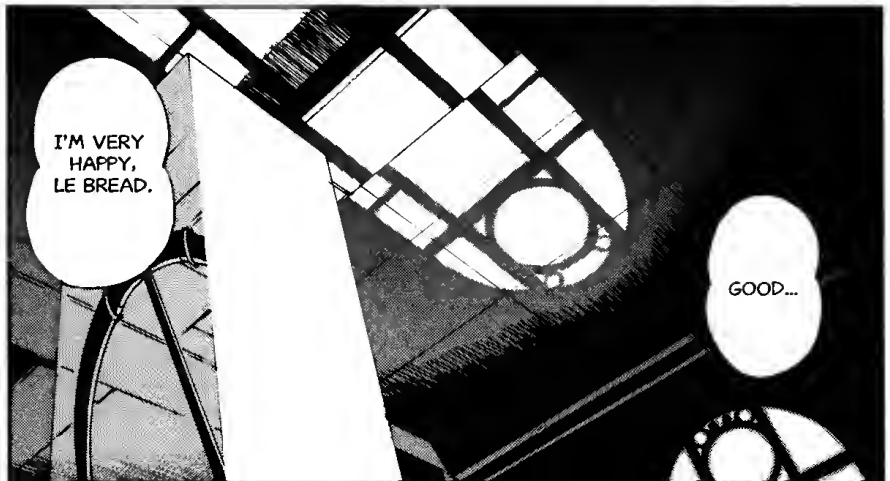



THIS IS THE SIREN ARROW, LANG LANG. WHAT DO YOU THINK?
IT'S BEAU-TIFUL.

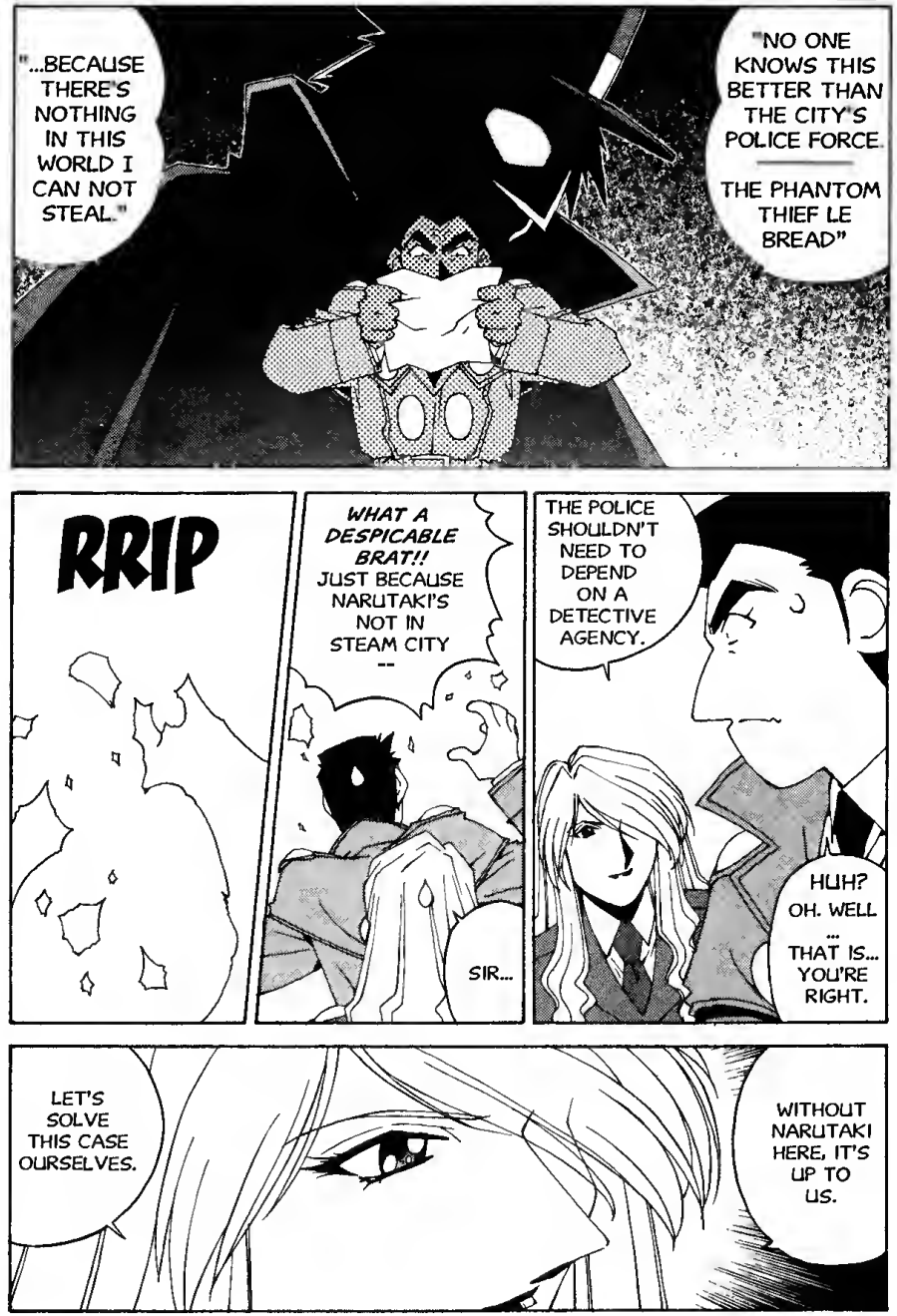

SCULPTED 900 YEARS AGO...
...IT WAS ONCE A SPECIAL EXHIBITION PIECE AT THE STEAM CITY MUSEUM. I THINK IT WILL BE HAPPIER *HERE.*

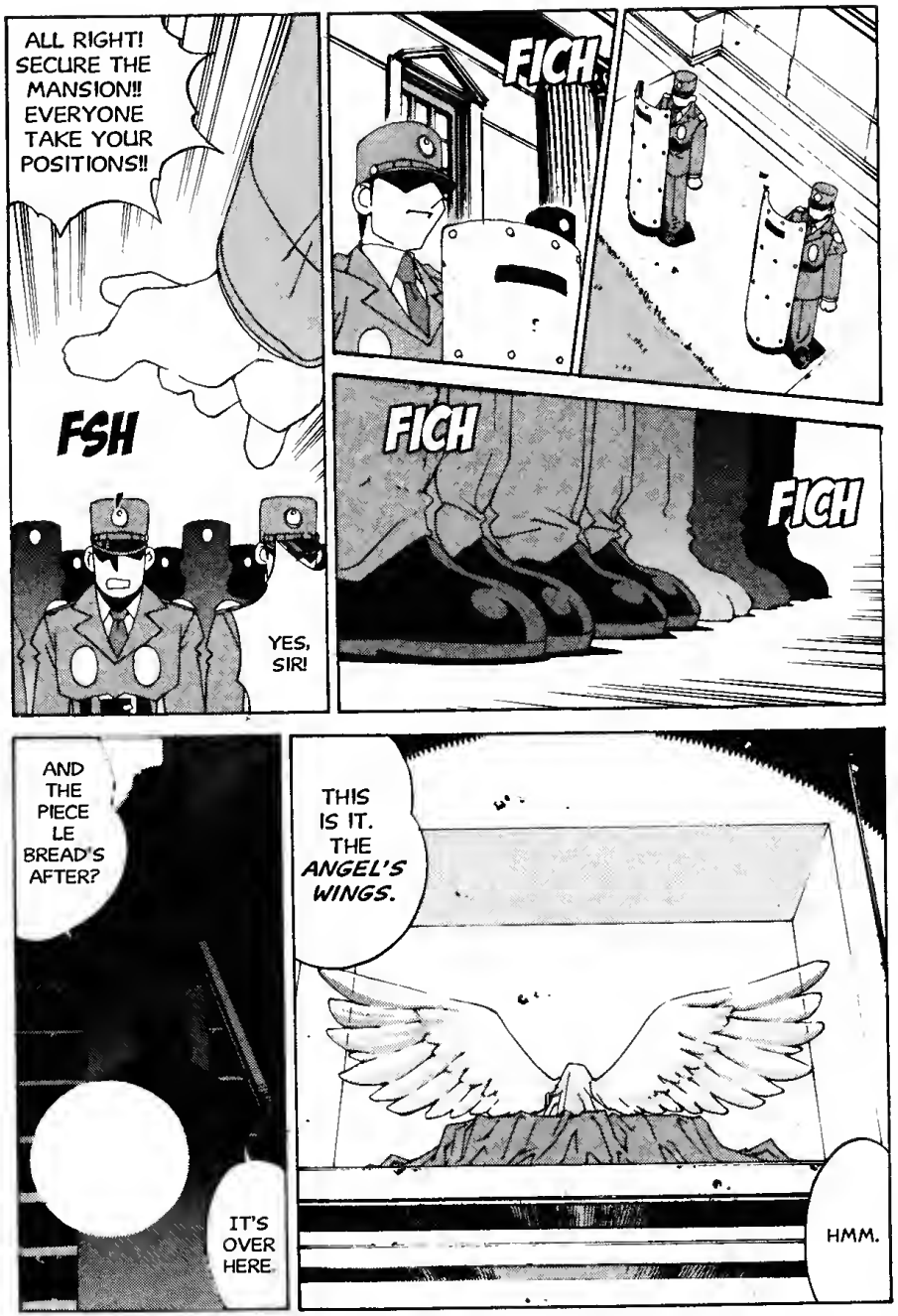

THESE WORKS OF ART ARE MUCH BETTER OFF AWAY FROM THE EYES OF THE VULGAR MASSES...
...HERE IN MY PRIVATE MUSEUM.


DOES THE SAME APPLY TO ME?
HM?
WELL....
...IF YOU'RE HAPPY, THEN THAT MUST BE THE CASE.
HA HA HA.


I'M VERY HAPPY, LE BREAD.
GOOD...

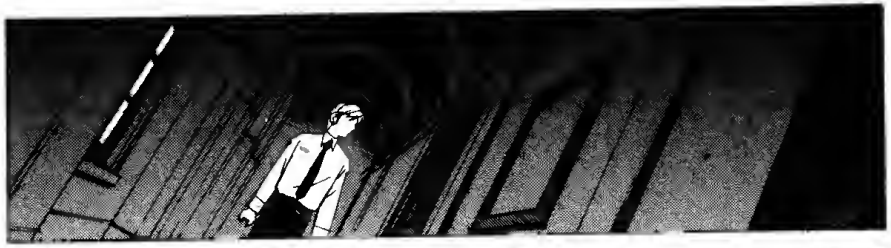
PEE-YOO
PEE-YOO
SHREE
VRM
A THREAT FROM LE BREAD!?
BAM
Y-YES! LOOK AT THIS...
"ONE WEEK FROM TODAY, AT MIDNIGHT, I SHALL RESCUE ..."
"...THE ANGEL'S WINGS FROM THIS MANSION'S BASEMENT."
"ANY SECURITY MEASURES WILL BE USELESS..."


"...BECAUSE THERE'S NOTHING IN THIS WORLD I CAN NOT STEAL."
"NO ONE KNOWS THIS BETTER THAN THE CITY'S POLICE FORCE.
THE PHANTOM THIEF LE BREAD"
RRIP
WHAT A DESPICABLE BRAT!! JUST BECAUSE NARUTAKI'S NOT IN STEAM CITY --
SIR...
THE POLICE SHOULDN'T NEED TO DEPEND ON A DETECTIVE AGENCY.
HUH? OH. WELL ... THAT IS... YOU'RE RIGHT.
LET'S SOLVE THIS CASE OURSELVES.
WITHOUT NARUTAKI HERE, IT'S UP TO US.

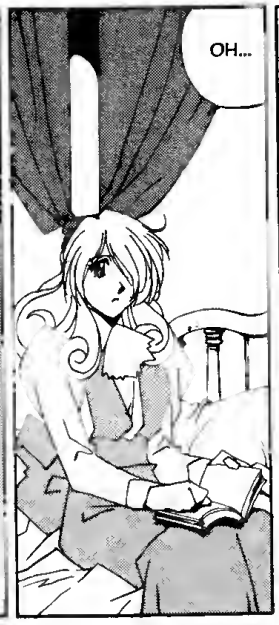

ALL RIGHT! SECURE THE MANSION!! EVERYONE TAKE YOUR POSITIONS!!
FSH
YES, SIR!
FICH
FICH
FICH
AND THE PIECE LE BREAD'S AFTER?
IT'S OVER HERE.
THIS IS IT. THE ANGEL'S WINGS.
HMM.

IT'S MADE OF CRYSTAL, AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIND FROM 500 YEARS AGO. IT'S EXTRAORDINARY, DON'T YOU THINK?
I DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND IT, BUT I'M IMPRESSED.
SIR, THE TUTOR HAS ARRIVED.
HM? AH, FINALLY.
TUTOR?
FOR MY DAUGHTER, LUNA. SHE DOESN'T GO TO SCHOOL...
TAKE HIM TO HER ROOM.
YES, SIR.
I CAN FIND MY WAY FROM HERE.
ALL RIGHT, SIR. THEN, I SHALL LEAVE YOU WITH LUNA.

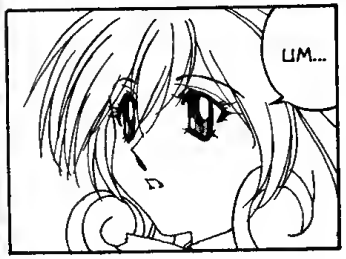
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

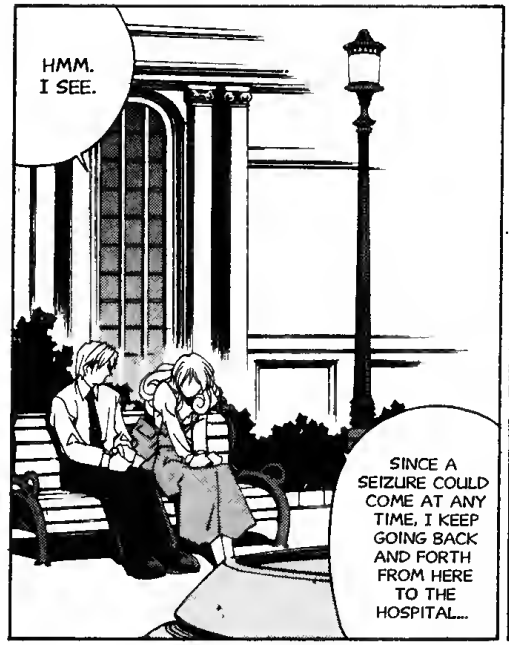


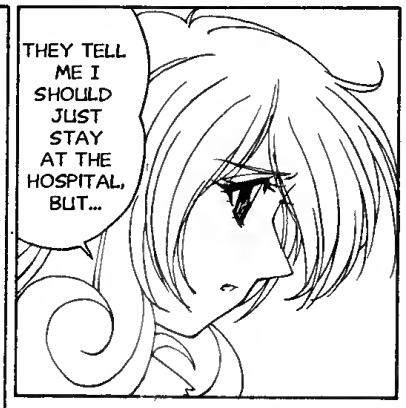
!


OH...

UH... HELLO.


UM...


HMM. I SEE.
SINCE A SEIZURE COULD COME AT ANY TIME, I KEEP GOING BACK AND FORTH FROM HERE TO THE HOSPITAL...


THEY TELL ME I SHOULD JUST STAY AT THE HOSPITAL, BUT...

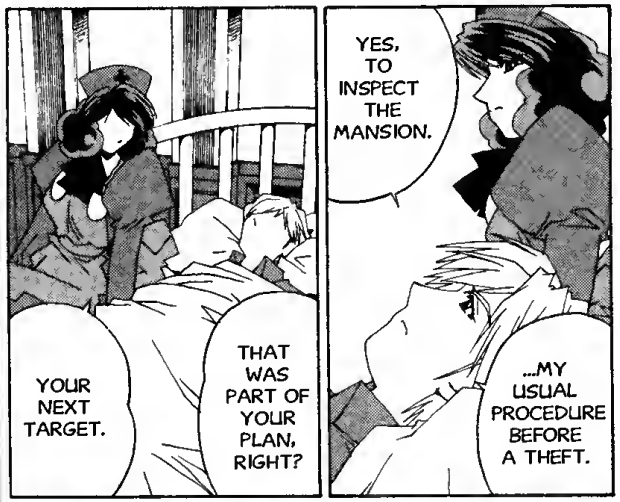
IT'S TOO STIFLING ...
YEAH. I DIDN'T LIKE IT.

.....

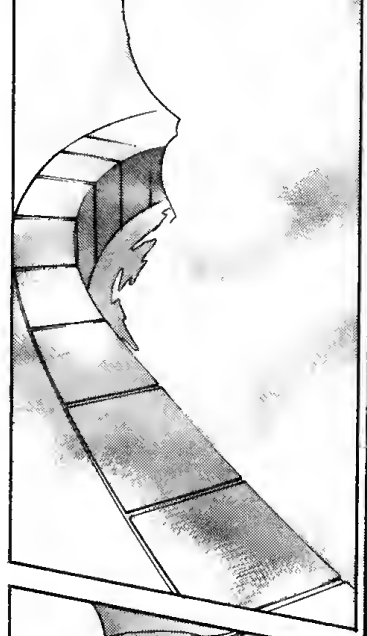
I UNDER-STAND HOW YOU FEEL, LUNA.
YOU DO?

YES...
I DO.

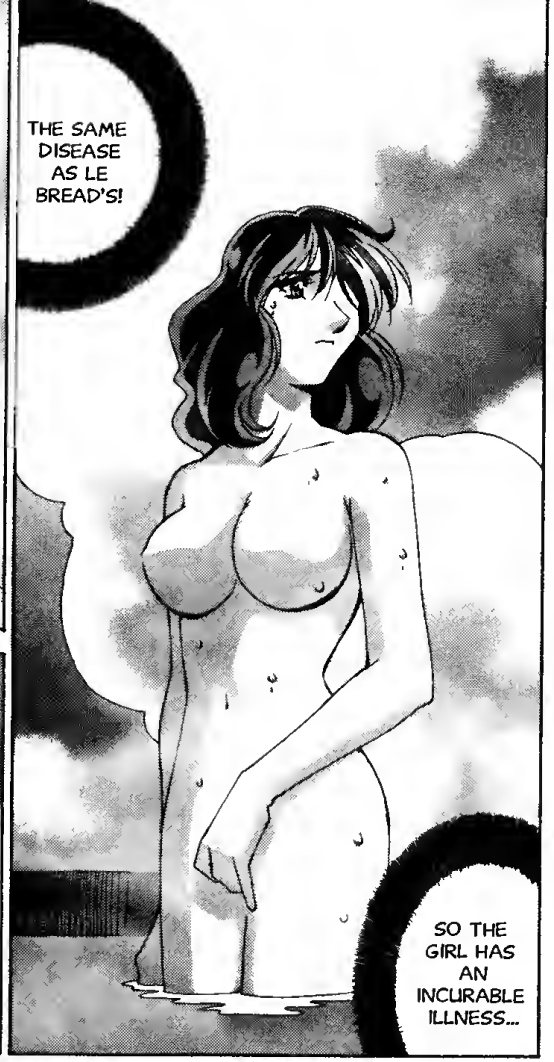
TODAY, I MET THE GIRL...
...FROM THE EIBACH MANSION.

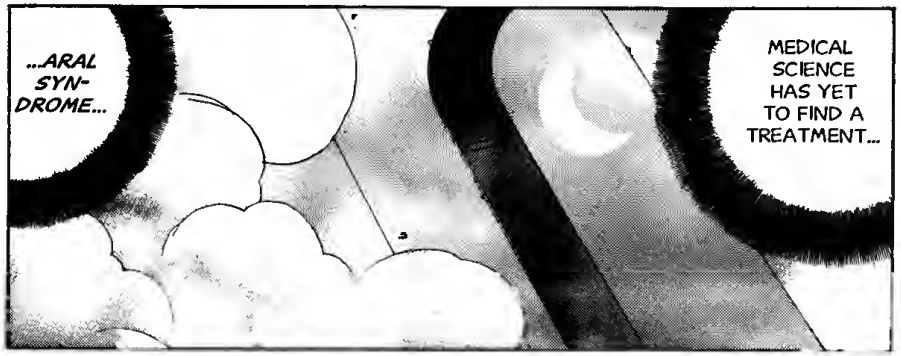

YES, TO INSPECT THE MANSION.
...MY USUAL PROCEDURE BEFORE A THEFT.
THAT WAS PART OF YOUR PLAN, RIGHT?
YOUR NEXT TARGET.

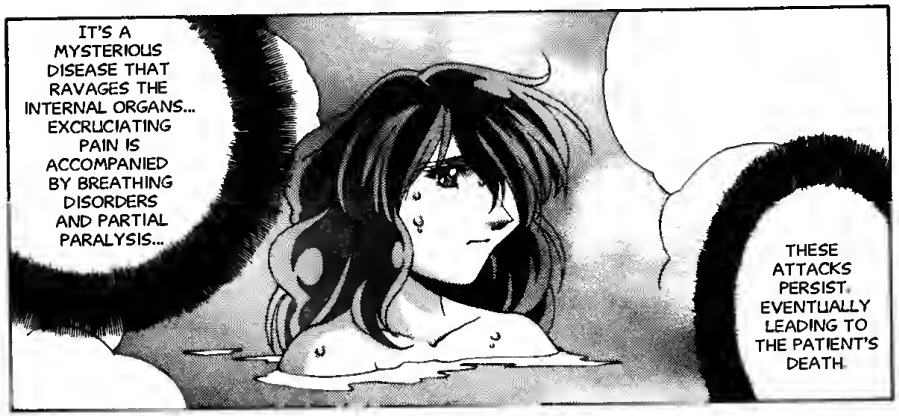
THE GIRL... SHE'S SUFFERING FROM THE SAME DISEASE I HAVE.
!!

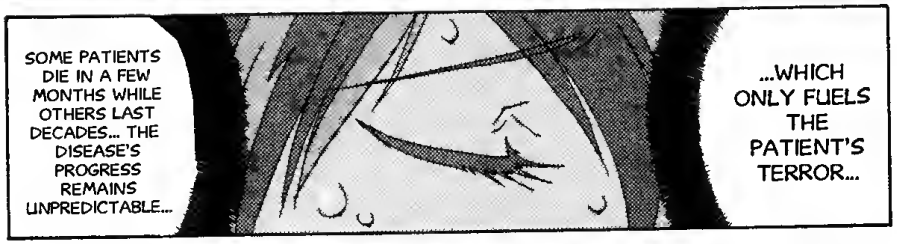


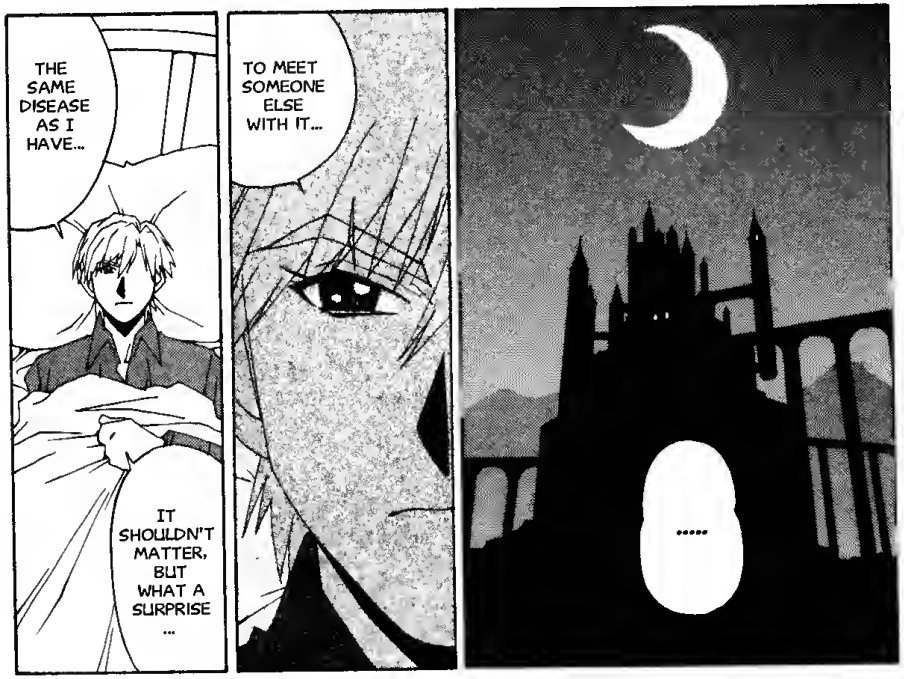
SIGH.


THE SAME DISEASE AS LE BREAD'S!
SO THE GIRL HAS AN INCURABLE ILLNESS...


...ARAL SYN-DROME...
MEDICAL SCIENCE HAS YET TO FIND A TREATMENT...


IT'S A MYSTERIOUS DISEASE THAT RAVAGES THE INTERNAL ORGANS... EXCRUCIATING PAIN IS ACCOMPANIED BY BREATHING DISORDERS AND PARTIAL PARALYSIS...
THESE ATTACKS PERSIST, EVENTUALLY LEADING TO THE PATIENT'S DEATH.


SOME PATIENTS DIE IN A FEW MONTHS WHILE OTHERS LAST DECADES... THE DISEASE'S PROGRESS REMAINS UNPREDICTABLE...
...WHICH ONLY FUELS THE PATIENT'S TERROR...


THE SAME DISEASE AS I HAVE...
IT SHOULDN'T MATTER, BUT WHAT A SURPRISE ...
TO MEET SOMEONE ELSE WITH IT...
.....

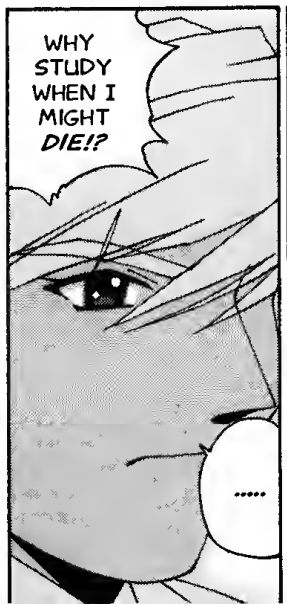
WHAT'S WRONG, LUNA?
WELL...
WHY STUDY?
HUH?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY I SHOULD STUDY.

I THINK THE PURPOSE BEHIND STUDYING IS TO ACCUMULATE KNOWLEDGE. WE ACCUMULATE ALL KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE, AND THEN...
BUT WHY BOTHER?

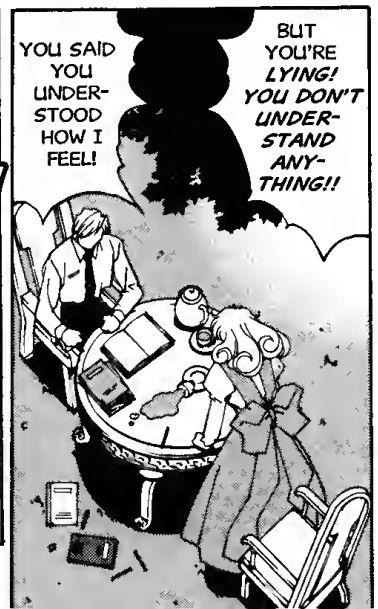
WHAT?
I STUDY AND STUDY TO LEARN ALL THIS MATERIAL... FOR WHAT?

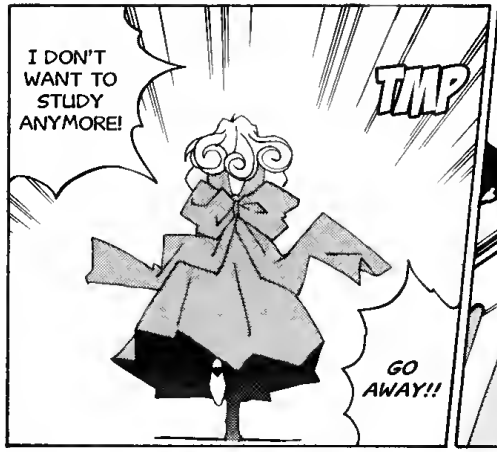
WELL, WHEN YOU GROW UP--
THAT'S FINE IF YOU'RE *GOING* TO GROW UP. BUT I...

I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF I'LL LIVE THAT LONG!
MAYBE I'LL SURVIVE UNTIL I BECOME AN ADULT! BUT I MIGHT DIE *TOMORROW!!*
KLNK
POOSH

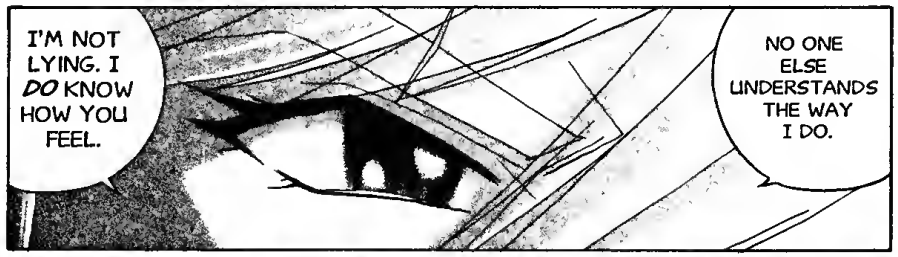

WHY STUDY WHEN I MIGHT *DIE!?*
.....

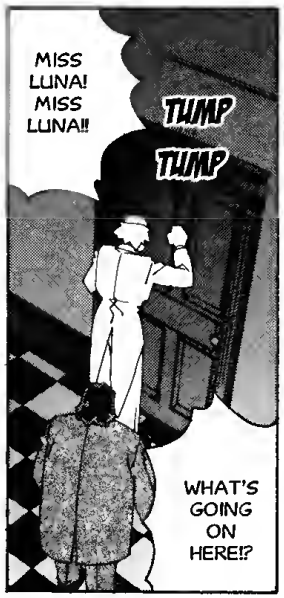
THIS IS *MEANING-LESS!!*
KSH

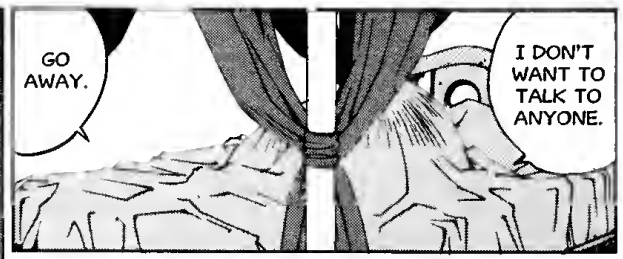

YOU SAID YOU UNDER-STOOD HOW I FEEL!
BUT YOU'RE *LYING! YOU DON'T UNDER-STAND ANY-THING!!*

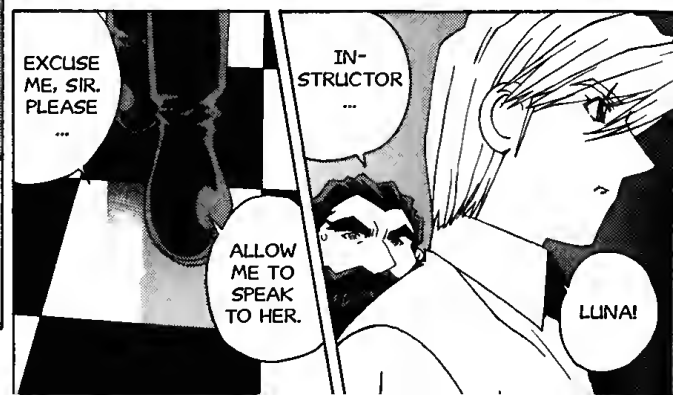

I DON'T WANT TO STUDY ANYMORE!
TMP
GO AWAY!!

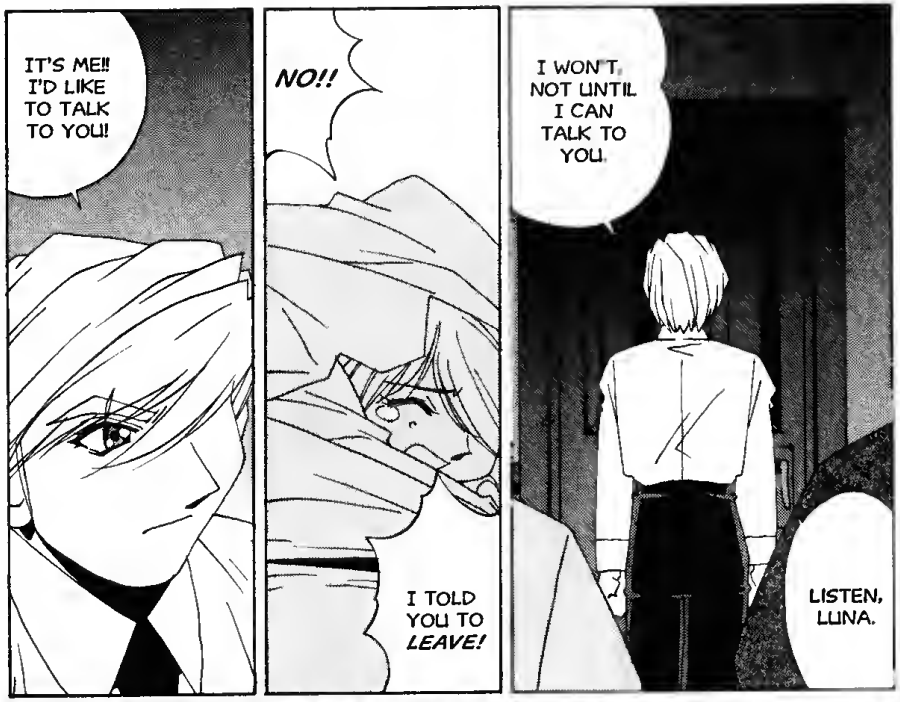
.....
TMP
TMP
TMP


I'M NOT LYING. I *DO* KNOW HOW YOU FEEL.
NO ONE ELSE UNDERSTANDS THE WAY I DO.

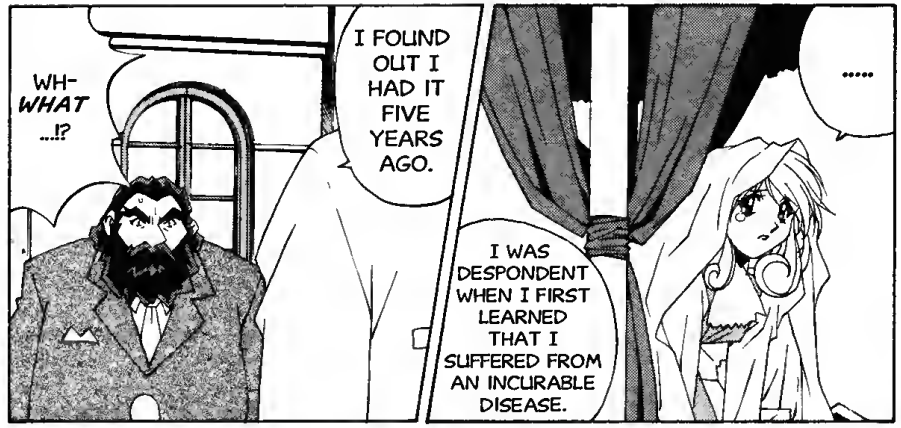

MISS LUNA! MISS LUNA!!
THMP
THMP
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE!?


GO AWAY.
I DON'T WANT TO TALK TO ANYONE.

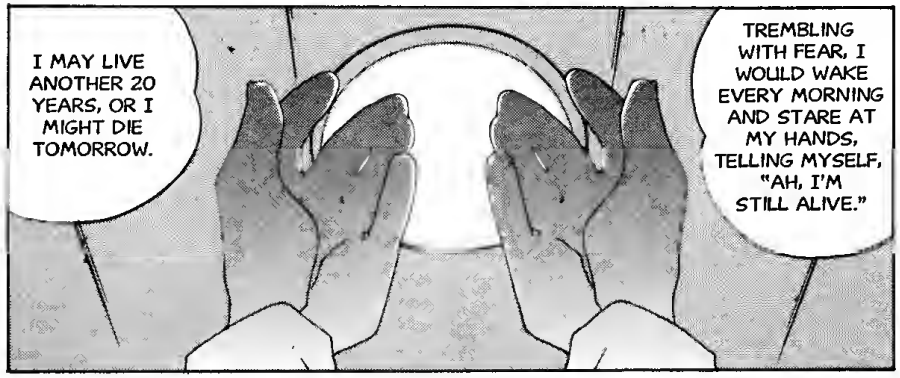

EXCUSE ME, SIR. PLEASE ...
IN-STRUCTOR ...
ALLOW ME TO SPEAK TO HER.
LUNA!


IT'S ME!! I'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU!
NO!!
I TOLD YOU TO LEAVE!
I WON'T, NOT UNTIL I CAN TALK TO YOU.
LISTEN, LUNA.

I, TOO, SUFFER FROM ARAL SYNDROME.


WH-WHAT ...!?
I FOUND OUT I HAD IT FIVE YEARS AGO.
I WAS DESPONDENT WHEN I FIRST LEARNED THAT I SUFFERED FROM AN INCURABLE DISEASE.
.....

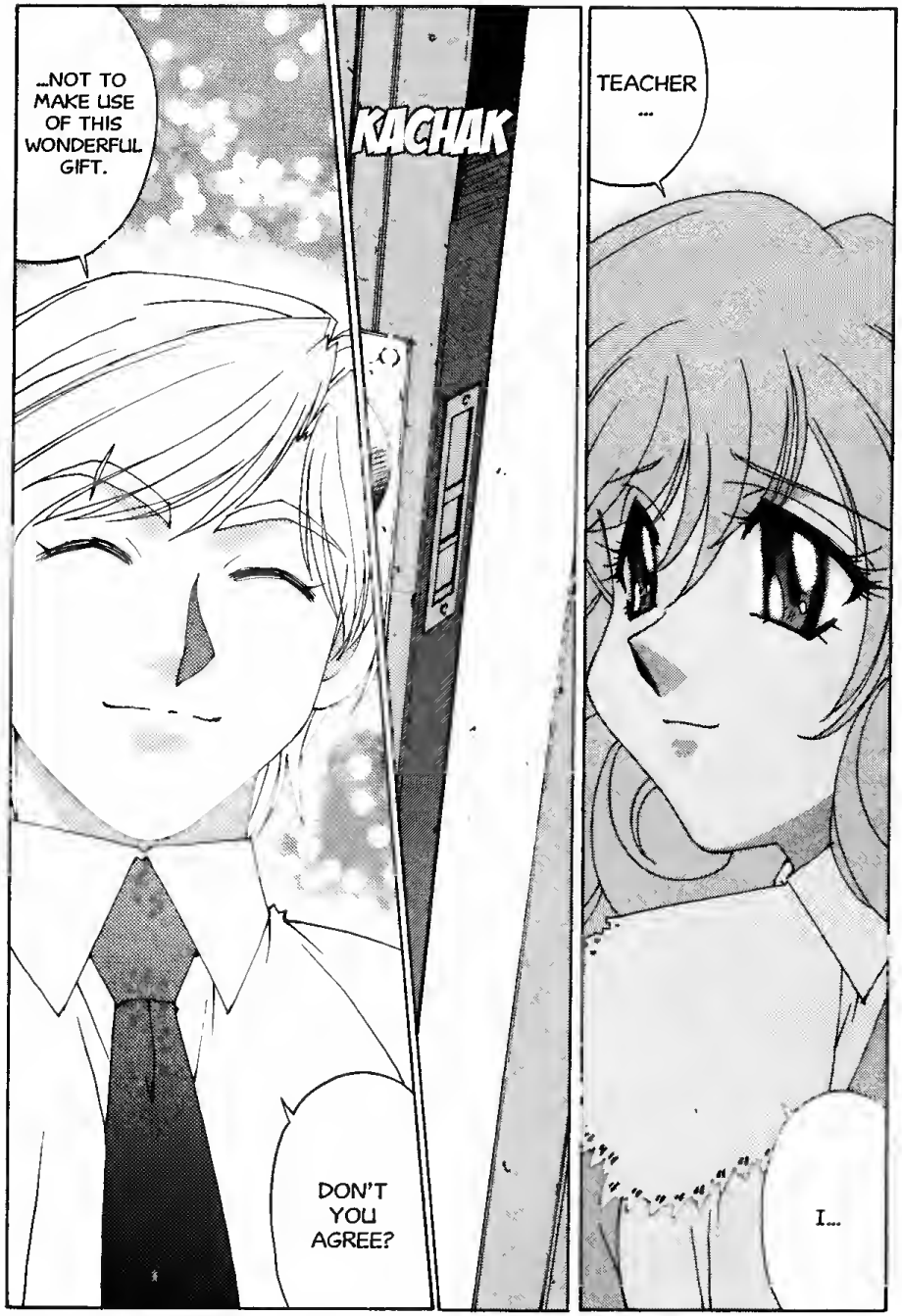
YOU...YOU'RE FIRED! WITH SOMEONE LIKE YOU AROUND, IT WILL ONLY MAKE HER MORE ANXIOUS!!
S-SIR...
LEAVE MY H--
UH...
.....


I MAY LIVE ANOTHER 20 YEARS, OR I MIGHT DIE TOMORROW.
TREMBLING WITH FEAR, I WOULD WAKE EVERY MORNING AND STARE AT MY HANDS, TELLING MYSELF, "AH, I'M STILL ALIVE."

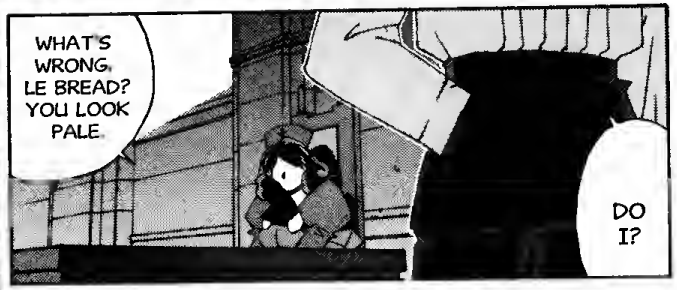
YOU REMIND ME OF THAT TIME. I HATED AND DESPISED EVERYTHING. I WAS SCARED OF EVERYTHING.
BUT ONE DAY, I REALIZED HOW PRECIOUS EACH DAY WAS, EVEN IF I WERE TO DIE IN A WEEK.
PRECISELY *BECAUSE* MY LIFE IS MUCH LESS STABLE THAN A NORMAL PERSON'S...
...I DECIDED I'D LIVE THAT ONE WEEK SO FULLY IT WOULD EQUAL THE LIFESPAN OF A NORMAL PERSON'S 60 YEARS.

OTHER-WISE...
...IT WOULD BE A TERRIBLE WASTE.

THE LIFE WE ARE GIVEN IS A GIFT. IT'S MEANT TO BE *TREASURED,* NOT STORED AWAY.
THE VALUE OF OUR LIVES DEPENDS ON THEIR USE. I THINK IT WOULD BE A TERRIBLE WASTE...


...NOT TO MAKE USE OF THIS WONDERFUL GIFT.
KACHAK
TEACHER ...
DON'T YOU AGREE?
I...

THE FINAL EIBACH MANSION PHOTOS...
FSSH
I'VE NOW COVERED EVERY ROOM.


WHAT'S WRONG, LE BREAD? YOU LOOK PALE.
DO I?

I'VE GOT A LOT ON MY MIND.

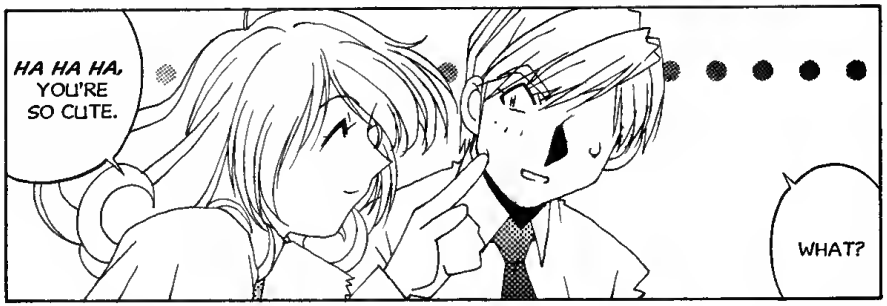
OH...

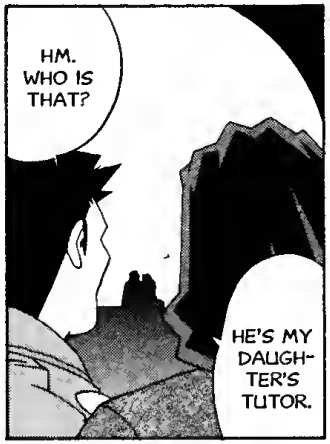
TREASURE...

THREE DAYS UNTIL LE BREAD'S PROMISED ATTEMPT.
EVEN LE BREAD WON'T BE ABLE TO GET HIS HANDS ON IT, NOT WHEN IT'S IN THIS UNDERGROUND SAFE.
IT'S AMAZING.
LOCK IT UP.
YES, SIR.
KRICH
KRICH
KRICH
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
SKRT
SKRT
SKRT
SKRT

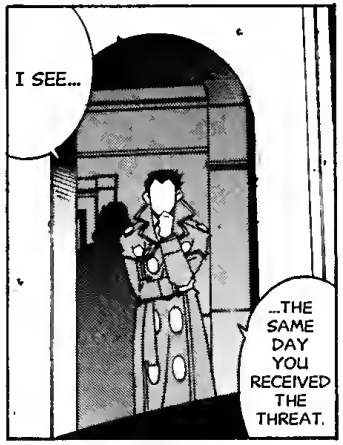
KLANG
LE BREAD CANNOT POSSIBLY KNOW THERE'S A SAFE IN THE FLOOR.
I SEE.
I SEE.
WHAT'S WRONG?
OH, IT'S NOTHING. NOW, WHERE WERE WE?
PAGE 128, LINE 14.
AH... SORRY.
HA HA HA.
HM?
EVEN YOU CAN GET DISTRACTED.
HUH?

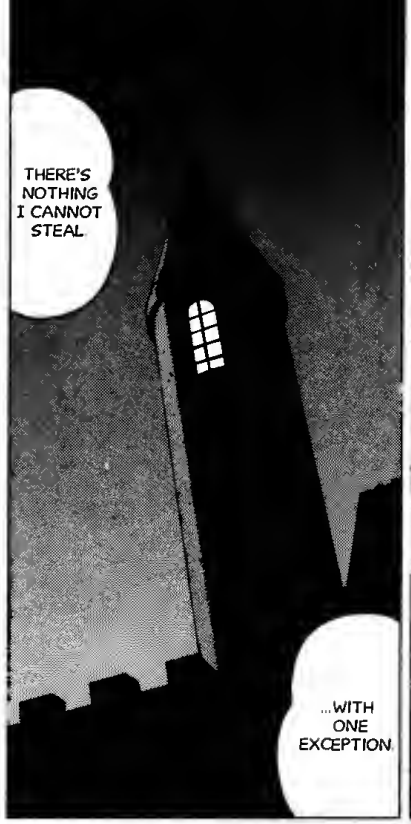
WELL...
...I AM HUMAN AFTER ALL.


HA HA HA, YOU'RE SO CUTE.
WHAT?


HM. WHO IS THAT?
HE'S MY DAUGHTER'S TUTOR.

WHEN DID HE START?
FOUR DAYS AGO.


I SEE...
...THE SAME DAY YOU RECEIVED THE THREAT.


THERE'S NOTHING I CANNOT STEAL
...WITH ONE EXCEPTION

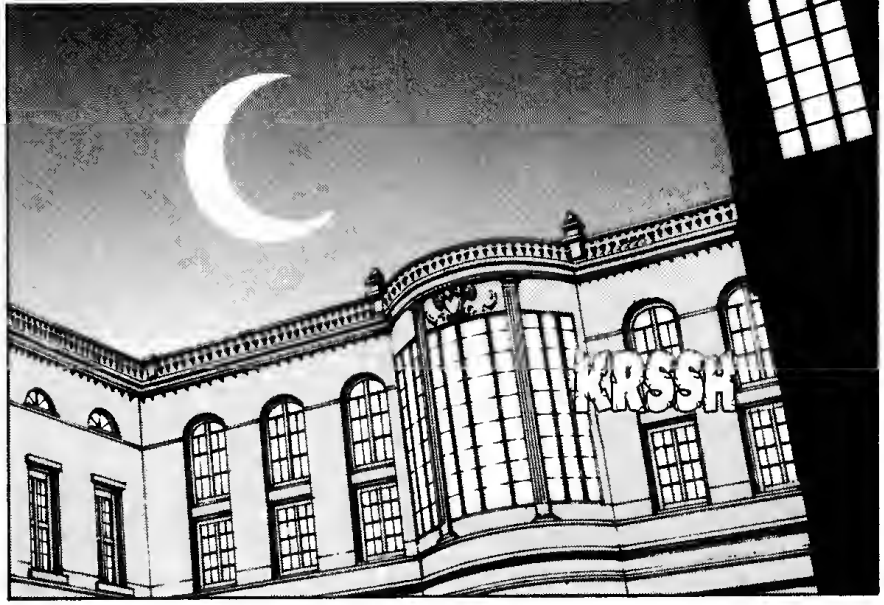
IF THE BOY DETECTIVE NARUTAKI HADN'T INTERVENED

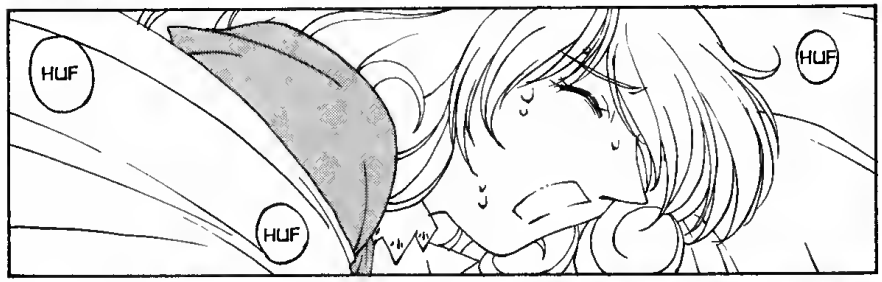
WHAT IS IT, LE BREAD?
YOU DON'T SEEM VERY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THIS JOB.

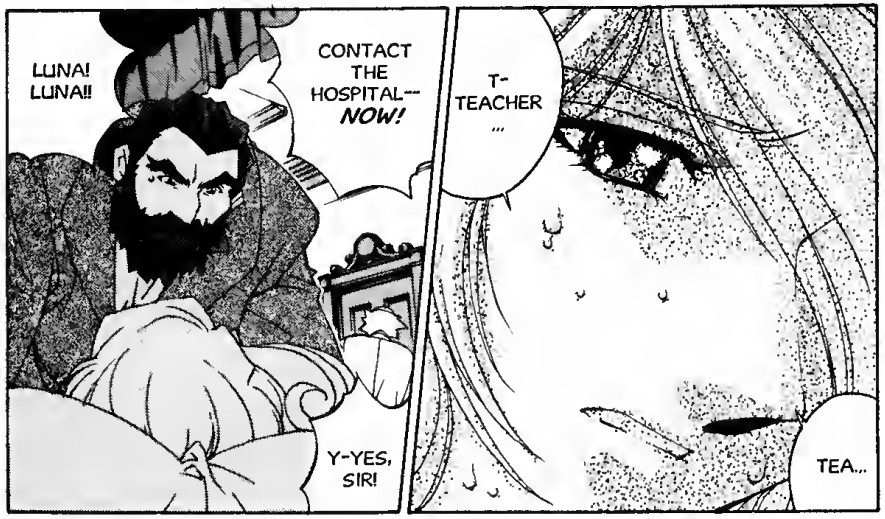
IT'S NOT THAT. MY WORK AS THE PHANTOM THIEF MAKES ME FEEL ALIVE.
MY BATTLE WITH NARUTAKI CONSTANTLY INSPIRES ME TO LIVE.

YES...
IT DOES.

I'LL STEAL IT WITHOUT A HITCH...
...I'LL CLAIM THE ANGEL'S WINGS.







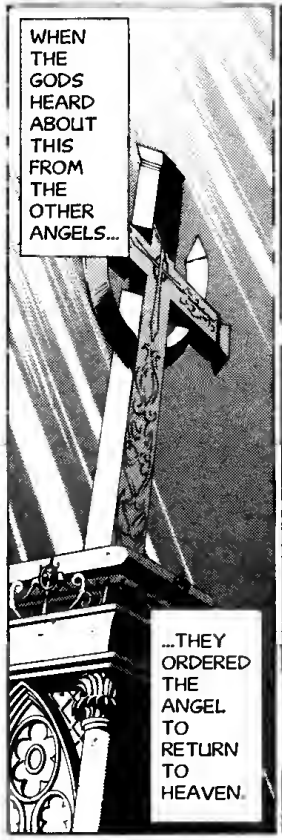
CASE TWENTY-FIVE, PART 2

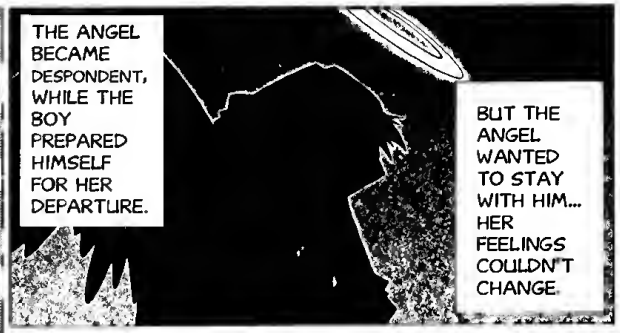
THE RETURN OF THE ANGEL

THAT'S WHEN I UNDER-STOOD IT ALL.
GOD CAN CALL BACK HIS CHILDREN AT WILL.
TEACHER
HM? WHAT IS IT?
HWOOO
ARE GOD'S CHILDREN ANGELS?
HM. I'M NOT SURE.
GOD...
WE HAVE ANGEL'S WINGS.
I SAW THEM ONCE.

REALLY...
THEY'RE VERY BEAUTIFUL, A TREASURE HANDED DOWN OVER GENERATIONS.
I'D SHOW THEM TO YOU, IF MY FATHER WOULD LET ME.
THANK YOU. I'M SURE I'LL SEE THEM SOMEDAY.
YEAH.
THERE'S A STORY TO THE ANGEL'S WINGS.
I'LL SHARE IT WITH YOU SINCE YOU READ TO ME.
I'D LIKE TO HEAR IT.
TUP

ONCE UPON A TIME, WHEN HUMANS LIVED WITH THE GODS...
...A HUMAN AND AN ANGEL FELL IN LOVE. OF COURSE, IT WAS CONSIDERED UNACCEPTABLE.

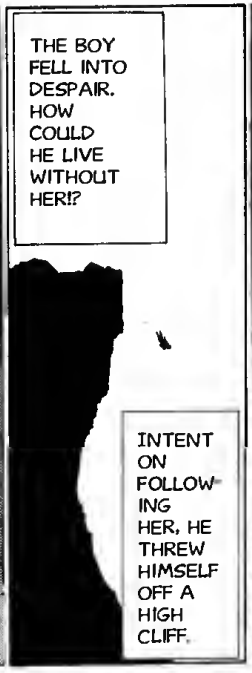

WHEN THE GODS HEARD ABOUT THIS FROM THE OTHER ANGELS...
...THEY ORDERED THE ANGEL TO RETURN TO HEAVEN.


THE ANGEL BECAME DESPONDENT, WHILE THE BOY PREPARED HIMSELF FOR HER DEPARTURE.
BUT THE ANGEL WANTED TO STAY WITH HIM... HER FEELINGS COULDN'T CHANGE.

SO SHE DECIDED SHE WASN'T GOING TO BE AN ANGEL ANYMORE...
...AND TORE OFF HER WINGS.

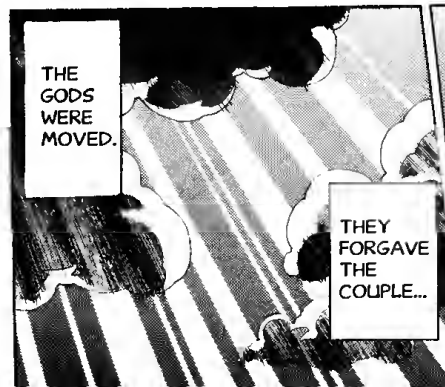
SHE MUST HAVE THOUGHT IT WOULD MAKE HER HUMAN.
BUT ANGELS ARE ANGELS; THEY CAN'T BECOME HUMANS.

AN ANGEL WITHOUT WINGS CAN ONLY VANISH FROM THIS WORLD.
SHE TOLD HIM THIS AND DISAPPEARED.


THE BOY FELL INTO DESPAIR. HOW COULD HE LIVE WITHOUT HER!?
INTENT ON FOLLOWING HER, HE THREW HIMSELF OFF A HIGH CLIFF.

THEN IT RAINED FOR A MONTH.
THE SEA RAGED...

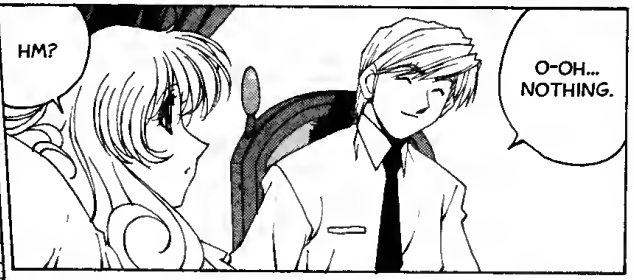
...AND WASHED THE BOY ASHORE.
IN THE BOY'S HAND WAS CLUTCHED A SINGLE FEATHER...

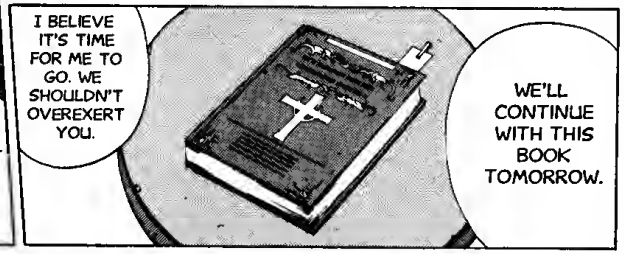

THE GODS WERE MOVED.
THEY FORGAVE THE COUPLE...

...TURNING THE REMNANT PAIR OF WINGS...
...INTO CRYSTAL TO IMMORTALIZE THEM.

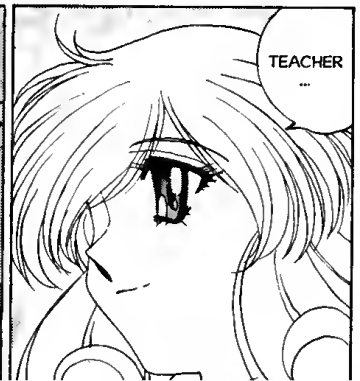
SO THAT'S THE STORY OF THE CRYSTAL ANGEL'S WINGS.
I SEE.

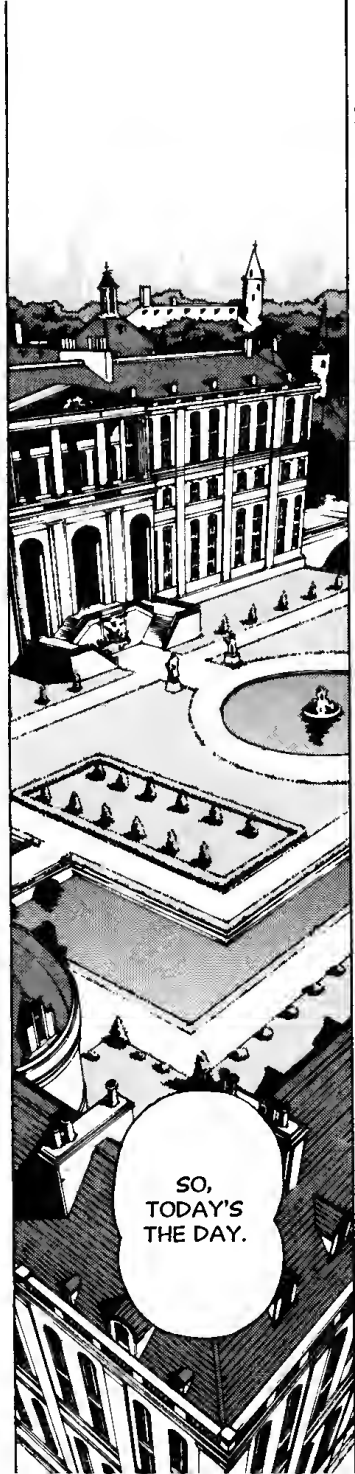
I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THAT...
NOW, I WANT THEM EVEN MORE!


HM?
O-OH... NOTHING.


I BELIEVE IT'S TIME FOR ME TO GO. WE SHOULDN'T OVEREXERT YOU.
WE'LL CONTINUE WITH THIS BOOK TOMORROW.

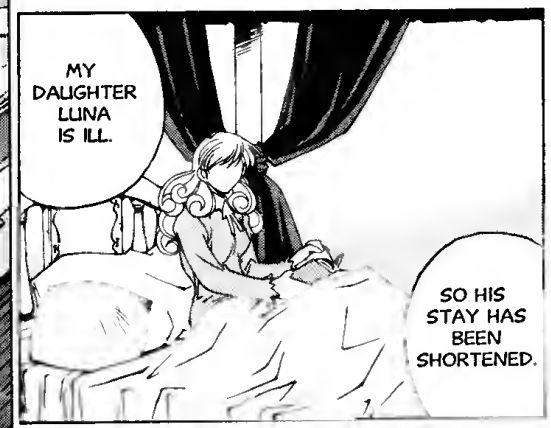
GOOD-BYE, LUNA.
KLIK

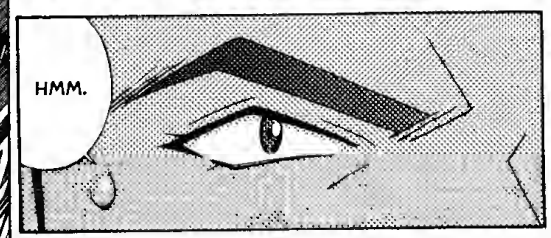

TEACHER ...

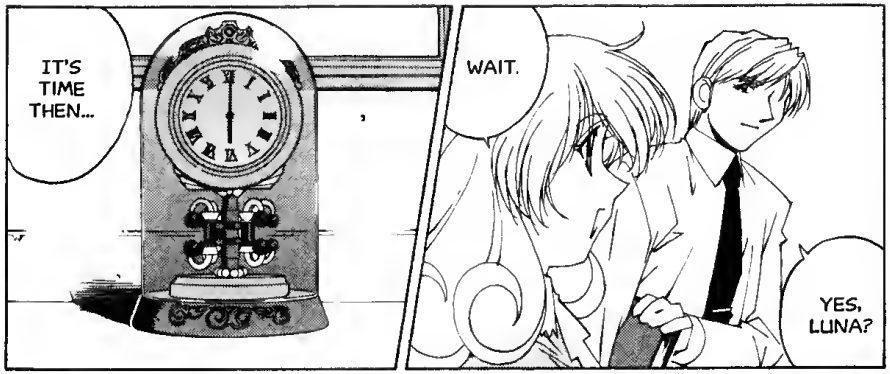

SO, TODAY'S THE DAY.

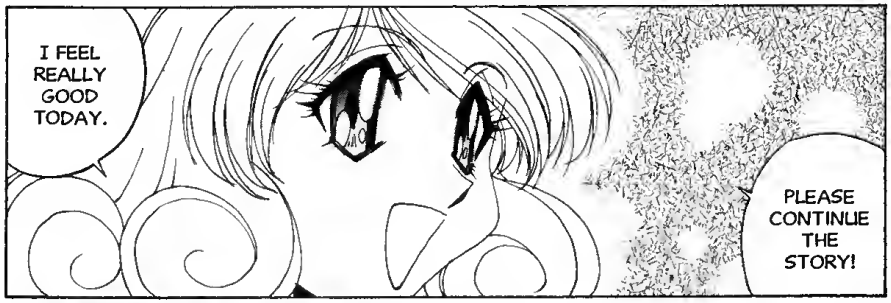
WE'VE DOUBLED OUR SECURITY.
I HOPE SO.
NOW, WE'RE READY TO TAKE ON LE BREAD.

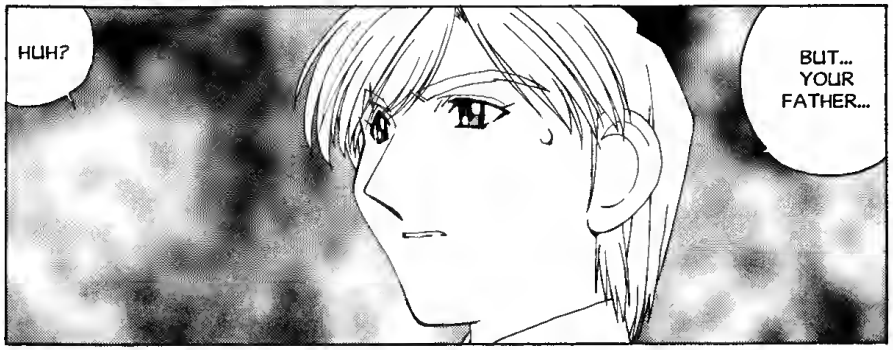
I'M STILL CONCERNED ABOUT THAT TUTOR...
HIM? BUT HE LEAVES AT SIX.

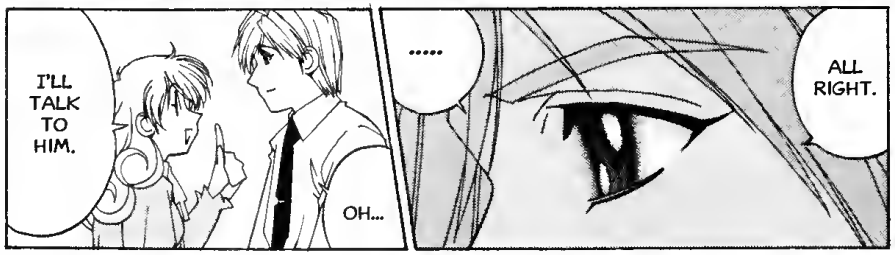

MY DAUGHTER LUNA IS ILL.
SO HIS STAY HAS BEEN SHORTENED.

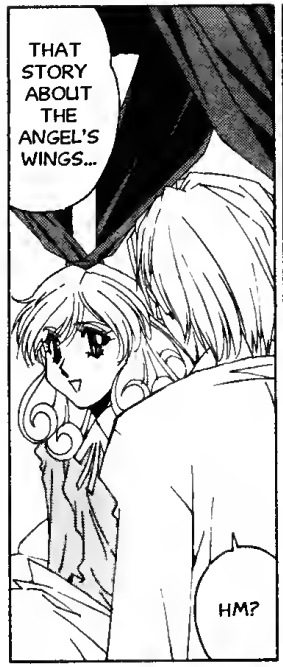

HMM.


IT'S TIME THEN...
WAIT.
YES, LUNA?


I FEEL REALLY GOOD TODAY.
PLEASE CONTINUE THE STORY!

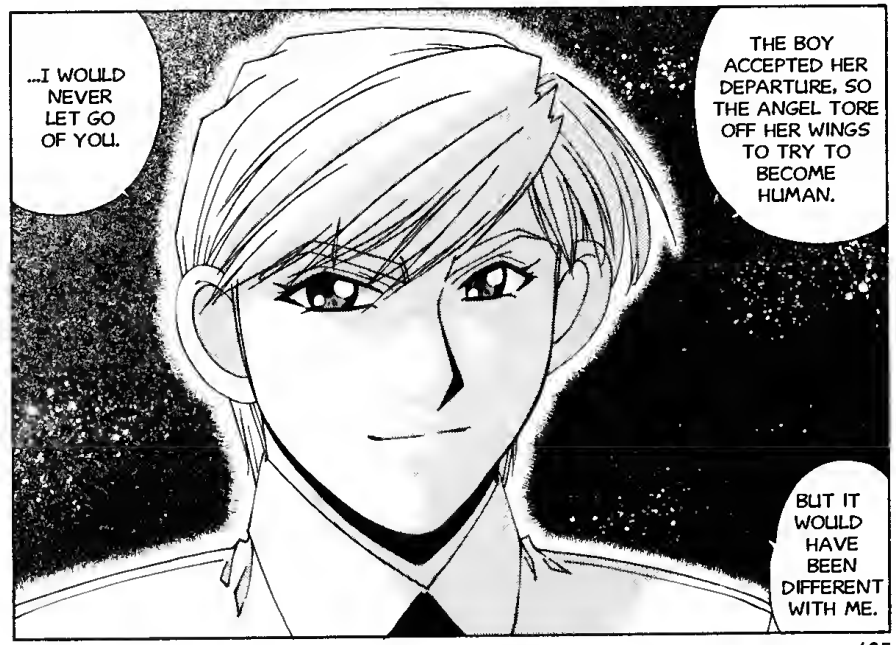

HUH?
BUT... YOUR FATHER...


I'LL TALK TO HIM.
OH...
.....
ALL RIGHT.


THAT STORY ABOUT THE ANGEL'S WINGS...
HM?

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF I WAS THE ANGEL AND YOU WERE THE HUMAN?
WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF THE GODS TOLD ME TO RETURN TO HEAVEN?

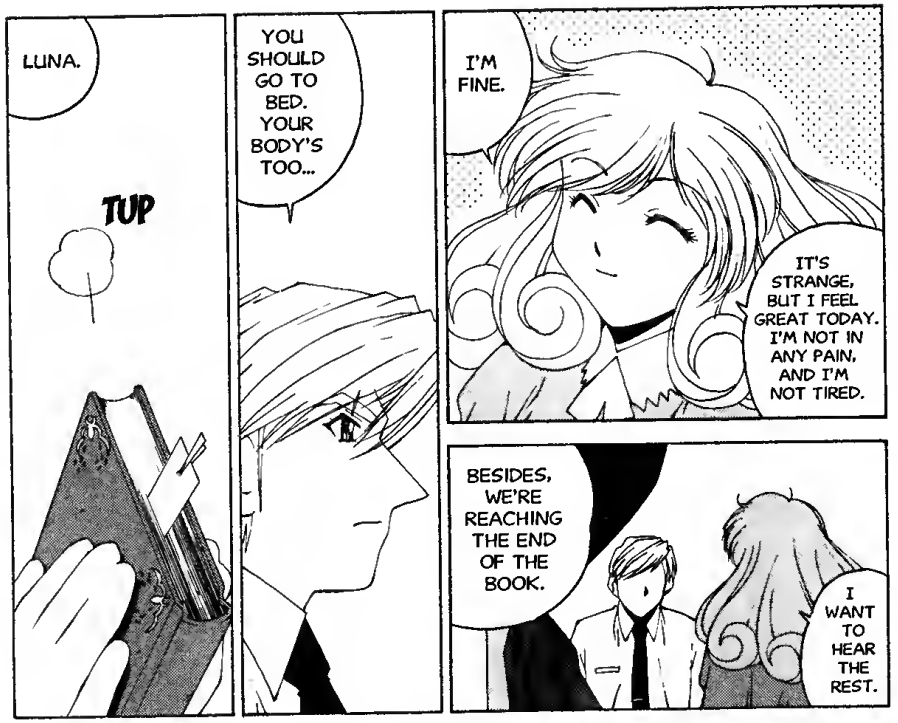
HM.. WELL...
...IF I WERE THAT BOY...

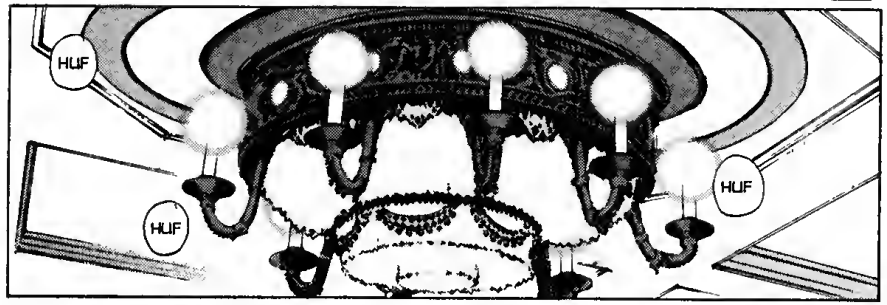

...I WOULD NEVER LET GO OF YOU.
THE BOY ACCEPTED HER DEPARTURE, SO THE ANGEL TORE OFF HER WINGS TO TRY TO BECOME HUMAN.
BUT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT WITH ME.

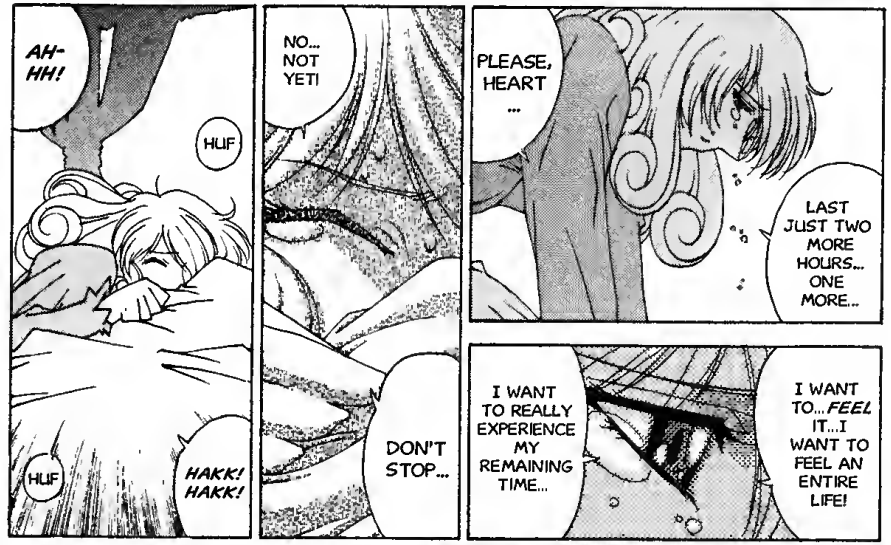
I WOULD FIGHT ANYONE, EVEN THE GODS, TO PROTECT THE ANGEL. I COULD FACE ANYTHING WITH AN ANGEL AT MY SIDE.
I WOULDN'T LET THE ANGEL SUFFER. I WOULDN'T HAND HER OVER TO THE GODS.
BESIDES, I CAN'T STAND THE THOUGHT OF SOMEONE STEALING SOMETHING OR SOMEONE FROM ME.
HA HA HA. YOU'RE GREAT!
R-REALLY ...?
YEAH, YOU ARE!
YOU ARE...

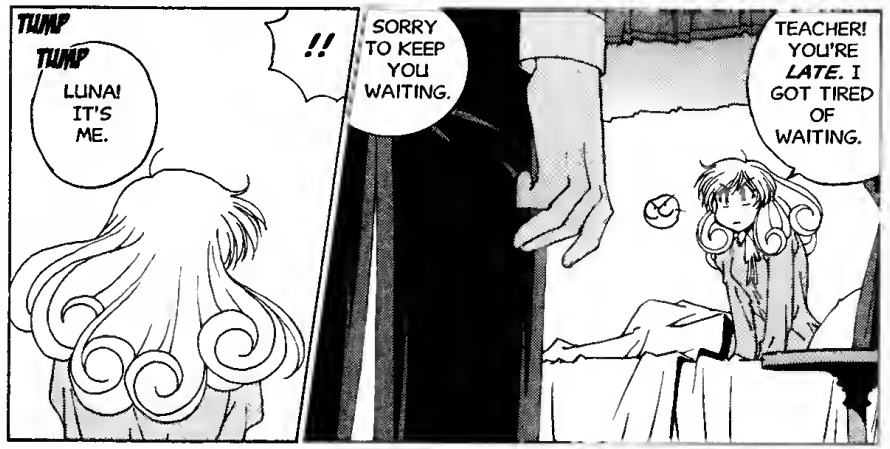
BONG BONG BONG

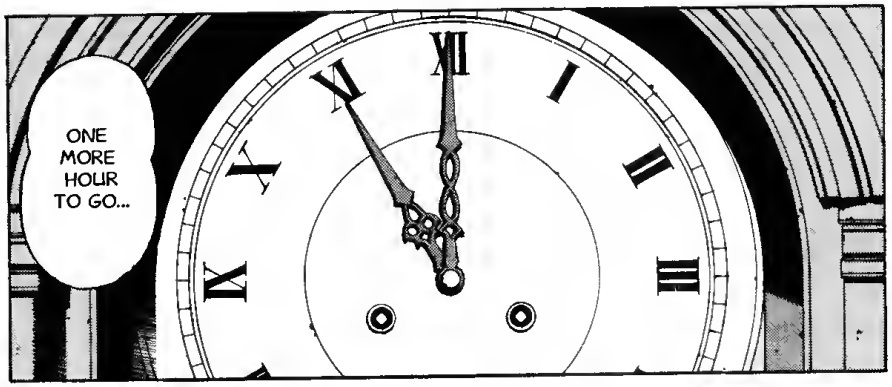
IT'S TEN O' CLOCK ...TWO MORE HOURS.
BONG BONG BONG
YES. THE HOUSE IS UNDER TIGHT SECURITY, SIR.
SO THAT TUTOR'S STAYING ALL NIGHT THIS TIME.
THE DAUGHTER REQUESTED IT, SIR.
IT'S AN UNLIKELY COIN-CIDENCE.
ANNA, KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON THE DAUGHTER'S ROOM.
YES, SIR.


LUNA.
TUP
YOU SHOULD GO TO BED. YOUR BODY'S TOO...
I'M FINE.
IT'S STRANGE, BUT I FEEL GREAT TODAY. I'M NOT IN ANY PAIN, AND I'M NOT TIRED.
BESIDES, WE'RE REACHING THE END OF THE BOOK.
I WANT TO HEAR THE REST.
AS YOU WISH, LUNA, BUT YOU MUSTN'T OVEREXERT YOURSELF.
OKAY!
I HAVE TO CALL HOME.
ALL RIGHT.
.....
WHAT CAN I DO?
I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO PROCEED AS SCHEDULED.

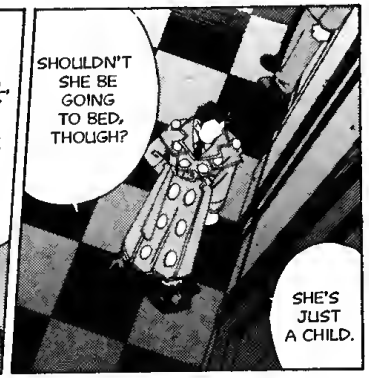

HUF
HUF
HUF


AH-HH!
HUF
HUF
HAKK! HAKK!
NO... NOT YET!
DON'T STOP...
PLEASE, HEART ...
LAST JUST TWO MORE HOURS... ONE MORE...
I WANT TO REALLY EXPERIENCE MY REMAINING TIME...
I WANT TO...*FEEL* IT...I WANT TO FEEL AN ENTIRE LIFE!


TUMP
TUMP
LUNA! IT'S ME.
!!
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING.
TEACHER! YOU'RE *LATE.* I GOT TIRED OF WAITING.

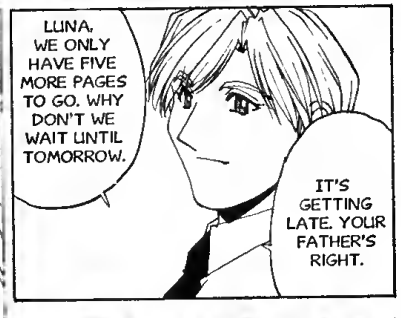

ONE MORE HOUR TO GO...

HOW'S IT LOOK?
NOTHING ABNORMAL, SIR. THEY HAVEN'T LEFT THE ROOM AT ALL.


SHOULDN'T SHE BE GOING TO BED, THOUGH?
SHE'S JUST A CHILD.

LUNA, YOU MUST GO TO BED.
STAYING UP THIS LATE ISN'T GOOD FOR YOU.

B-BUT!

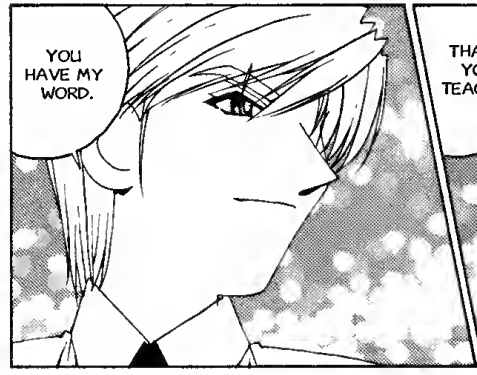

LUNA, WE ONLY HAVE FIVE MORE PAGES TO GO. WHY DON'T WE WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW.
IT'S GETTING LATE. YOUR FATHER'S RIGHT.

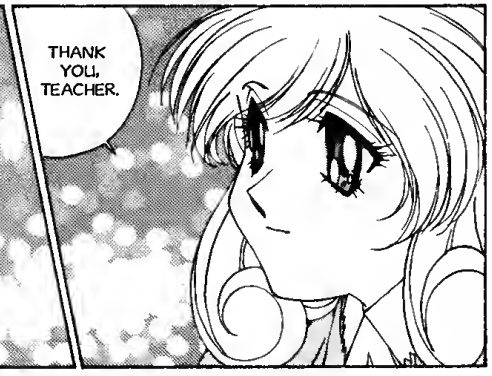
O-OKAY...

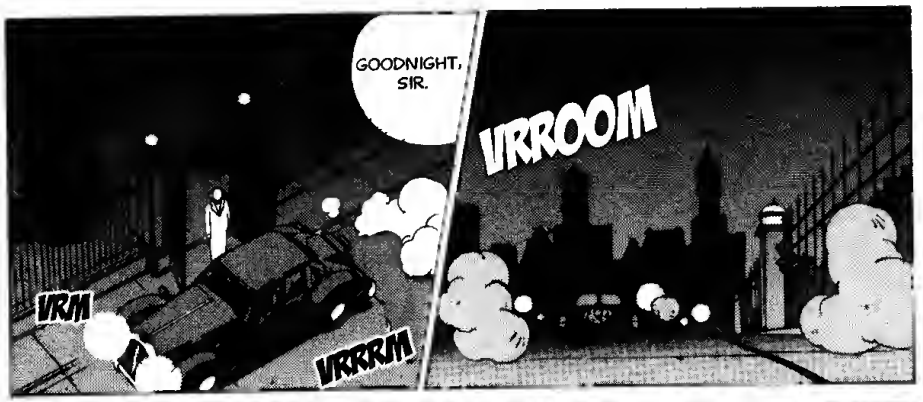
I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW.
YES, SIR.

TEACHER!
YES, LUNA?

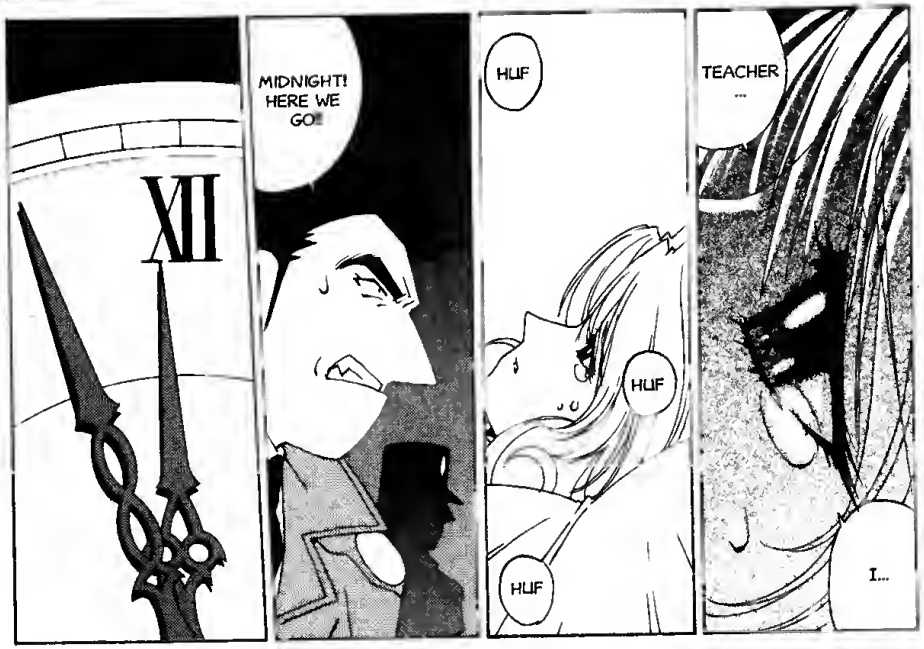
PROMISE ME THAT YOU'LL READ THE LAST FIVE PAGES TO ME!
SWEAR IT!


YOU HAVE MY WORD.

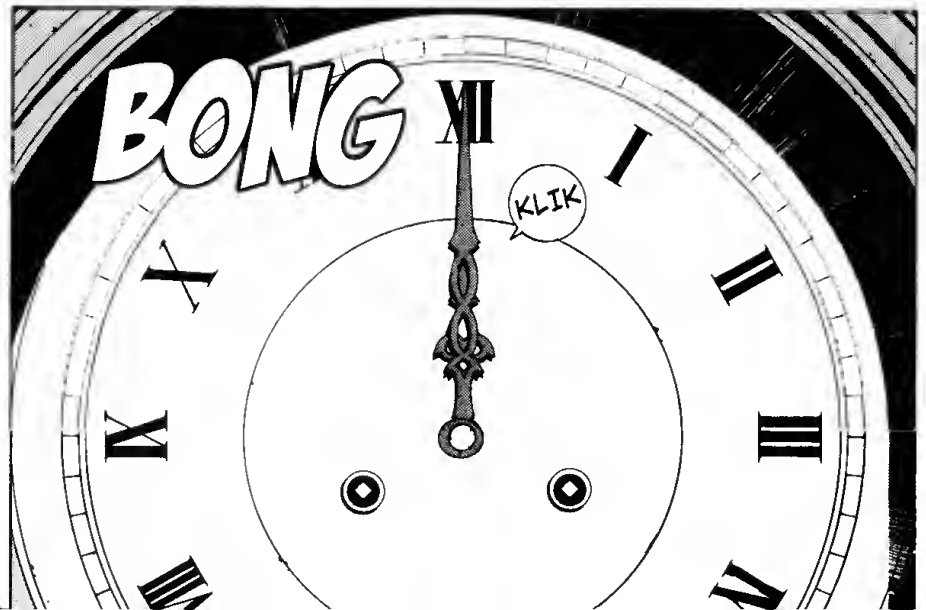

THANK YOU, TEACHER.


GOODNIGHT, SIR.
VRROOM
VRM
VRRRM

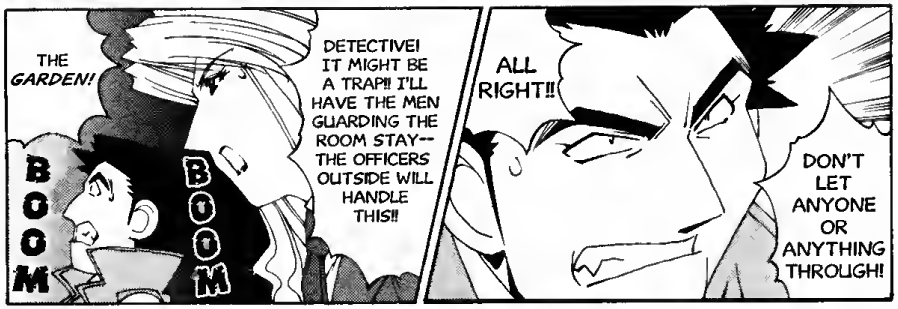
.....
VRRR


XII
MIDNIGHT! HERE WE GO!
HUF
HUF
HUF
TEACHER ...
I...

KLIK
XII
HUF
HUF
TEA... CHER...
KLIK
XII
YOU GAVE ME... YOUR WORD!


BONG
XII
I
II
III
IV
V
VI
VII
VIII
IX
X
XI
KLIK

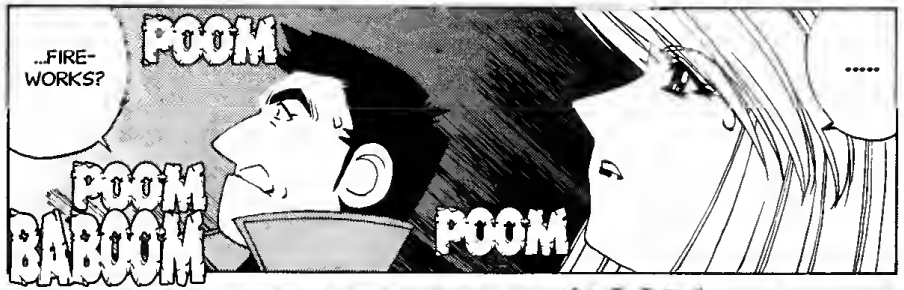
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM

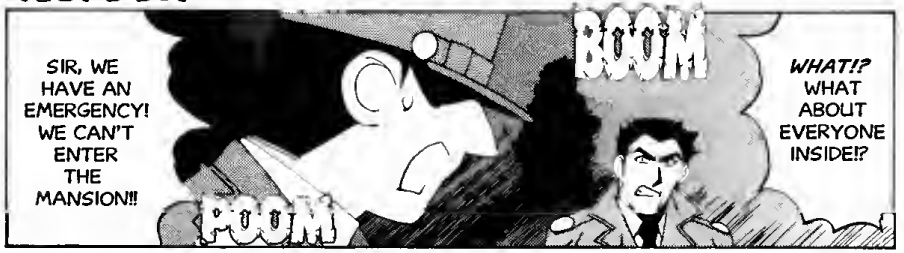

THE GARDEN!
BOOM
BOOM
DETECTIVE! IT MIGHT BE A TRAP!! I'LL HAVE THE MEN GUARDING THE ROOM STAY-- THE OFFICERS OUTSIDE WILL HANDLE THIS!!
ALL RIGHT!!
DON'T LET ANYONE OR ANYTHING THROUGH!

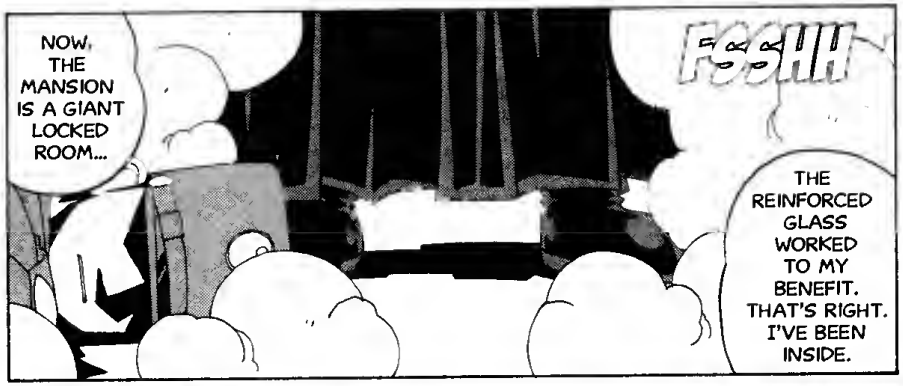
POP POP POP POP POP POP POP POP

BABOOM
HUH?
BOOM
BOOM

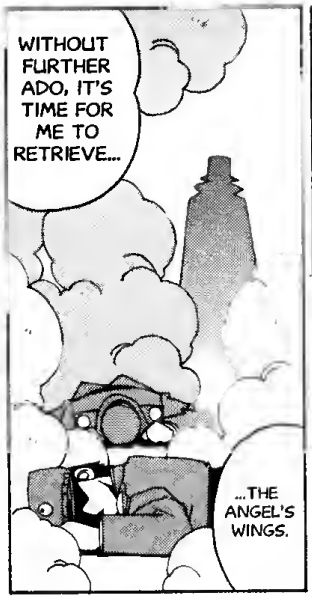
BOOOOM
BABOOM
POOM
POOM
POOM


...FIRE-WORKS?
POOM
POOM
BABOOM
POOM
.....


SIR, WE HAVE AN EMERGENCY! WE CAN'T ENTER THE MANSION!!
BOOM
POOM
WHAT!? WHAT ABOUT EVERYONE INSIDE!?

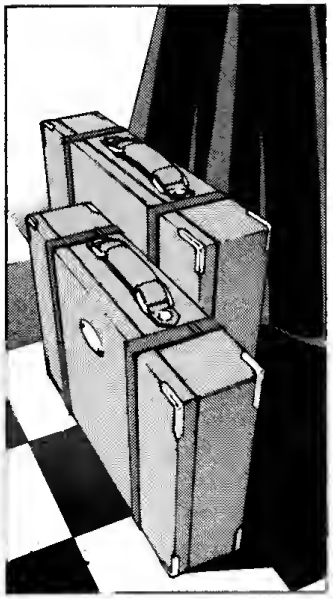

NOW, THE MANSION IS A GIANT LOCKED ROOM...
FSSHH
THE REINFORCED GLASS WORKED TO MY BENEFIT. THAT'S RIGHT. I'VE BEEN INSIDE.

THIS SLEEPING GAS IS NON-TOXIC.
YOU'LL ALL SLEEP FOR AN HOUR OR SO.


WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, IT'S TIME FOR ME TO RETRIEVE...
...THE ANGEL'S WINGS.

MY THEFT MUST BE AN ART.
SO THE FIREWORKS WERE JUST PART OF THE PERFOR-MANCE.

KLANG

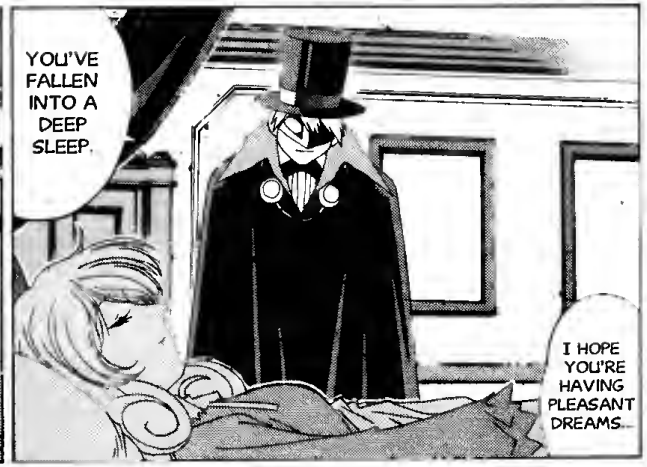


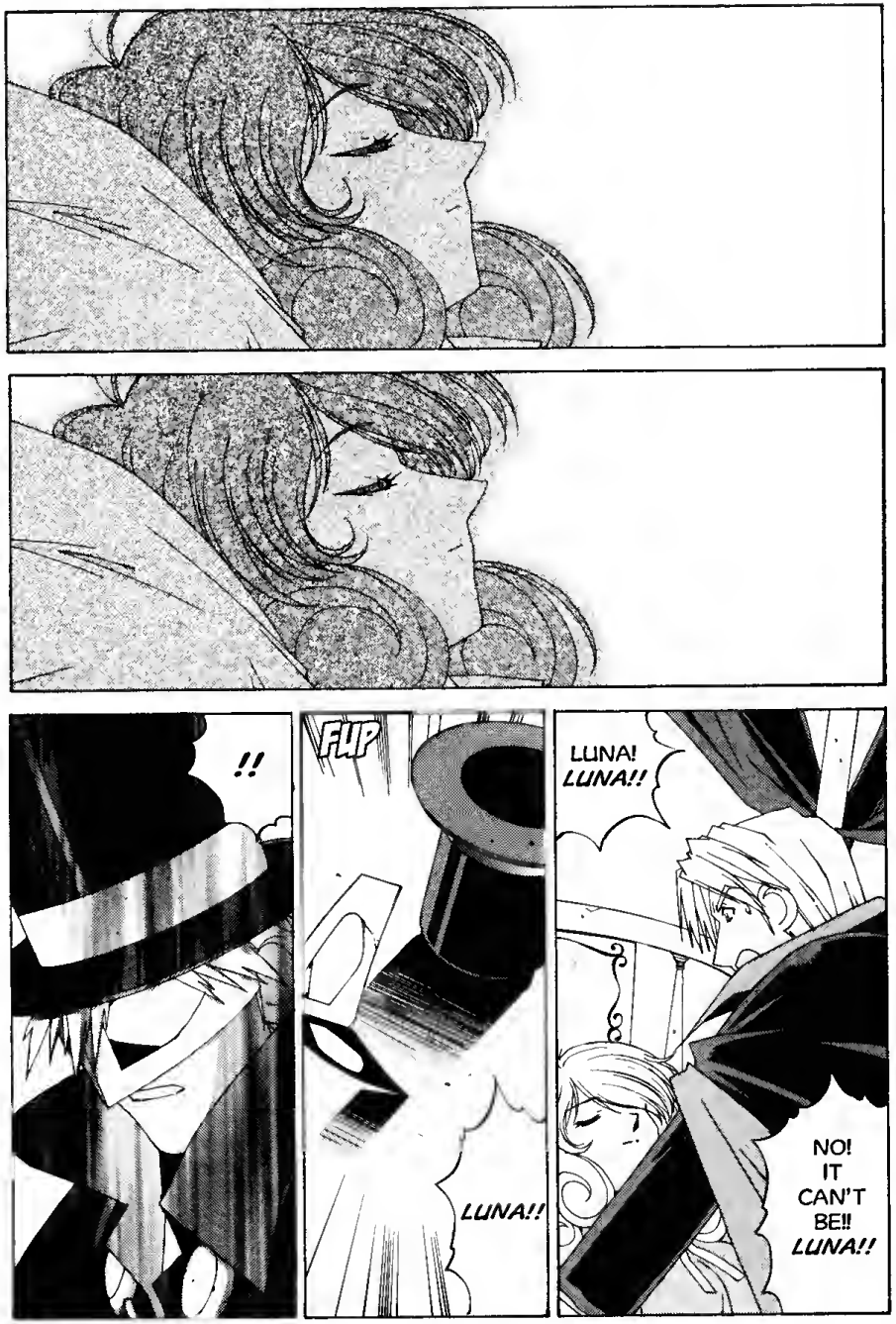
LANG LANG, TIME TO COME.
ALL RIGHT.

THE GAS IS FADING.
HM.

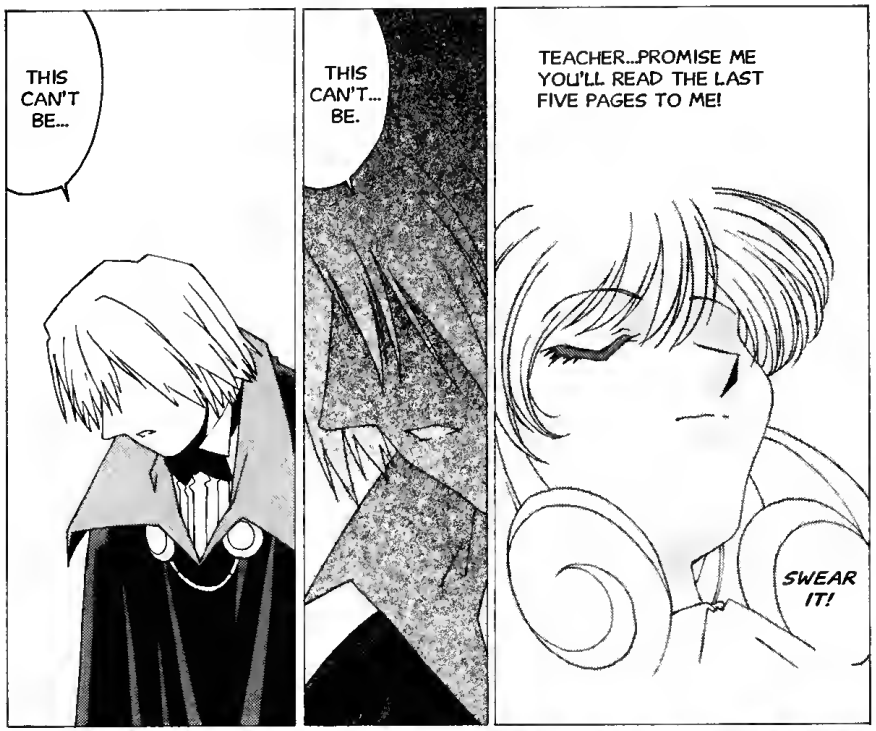
LUNA...
I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO SEE THIS COMMOTION.

KA CHAK


YOU'VE FALLEN INTO A DEEP SLEEP.
I HOPE YOU'RE HAVING PLEASANT DREAMS...

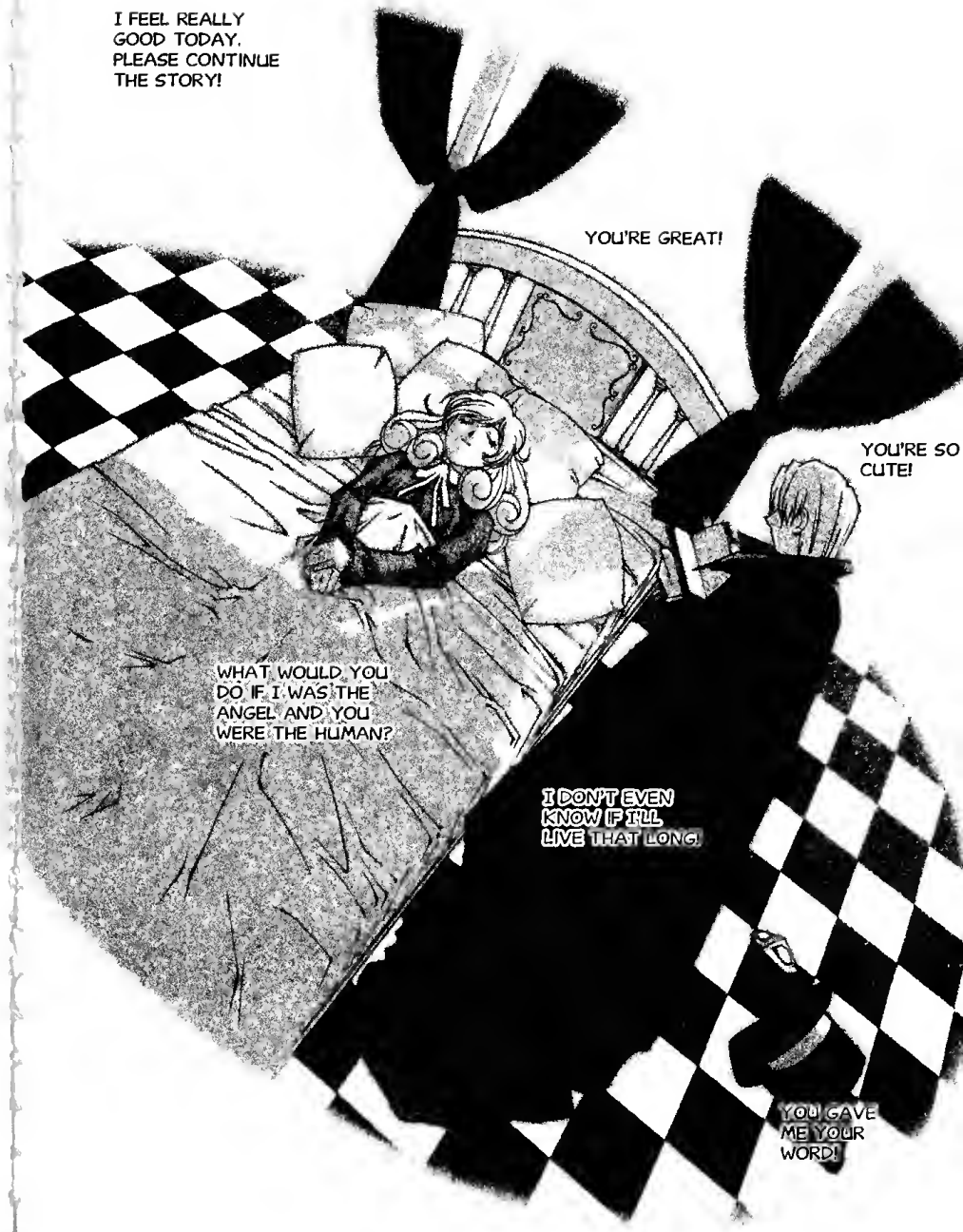

!!
FLIP
LUNA!!
LUNA!
LUNA!!
NO!
IT
CAN'T
BE!!
LUNA!!

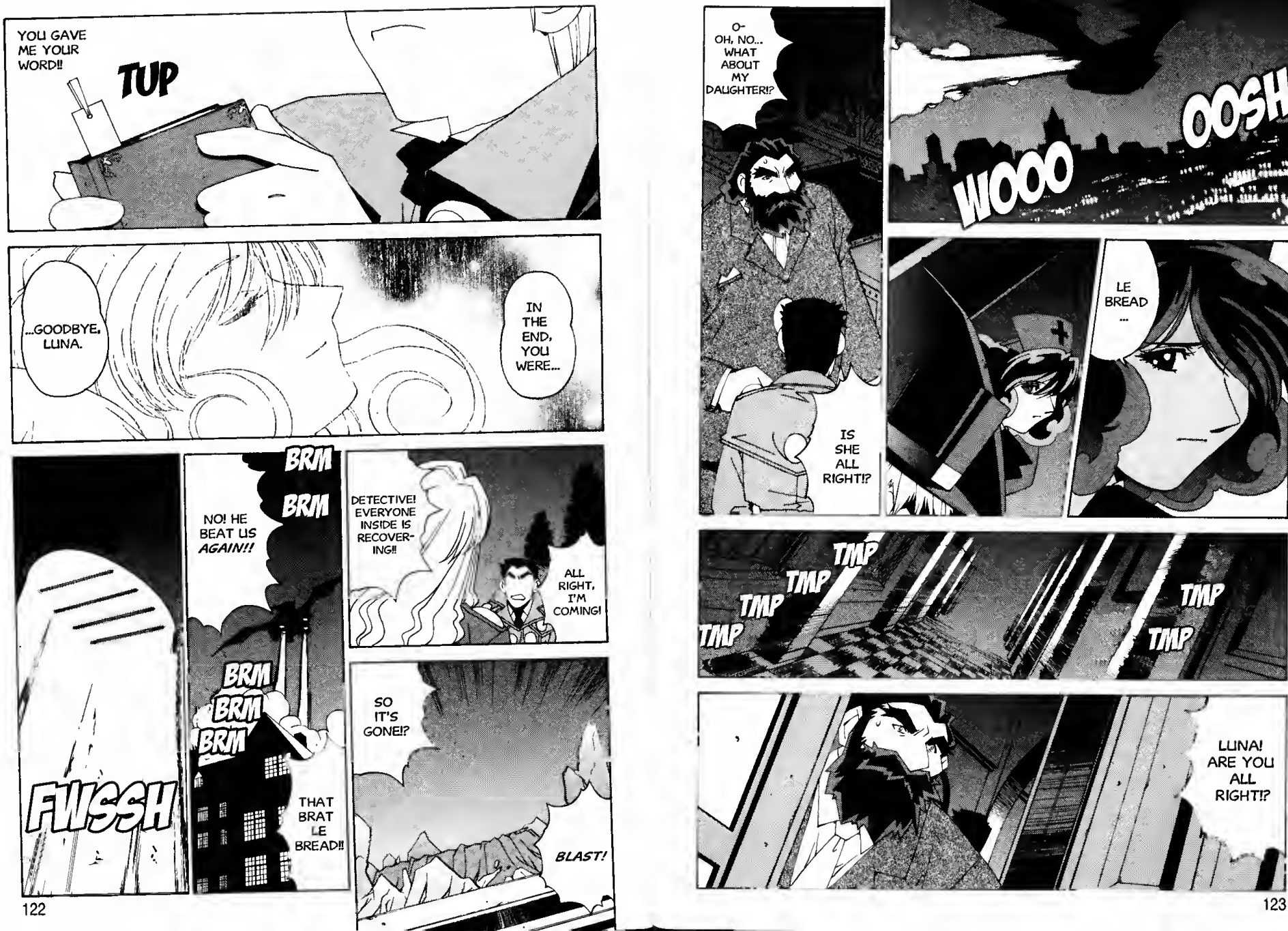
LUNA!!
LUNA!!

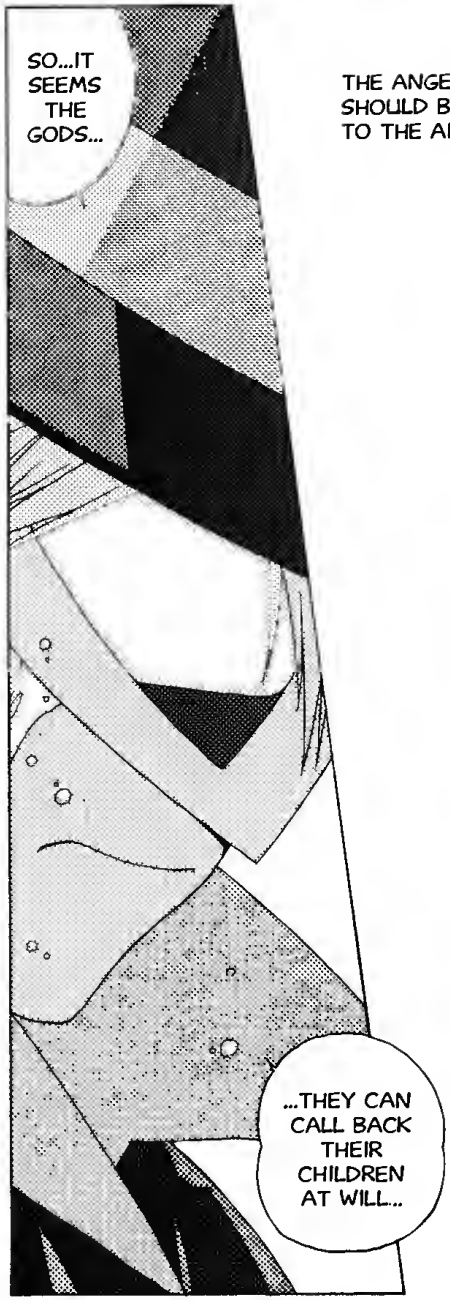

THIS CAN'T BE...
THIS CAN'T... BE.
TEACHER...PROMISE ME YOU'LL READ THE LAST FIVE PAGES TO ME!
SWEAR IT!

YES...
I PROMISED.

TEACHER! TEACHER!!

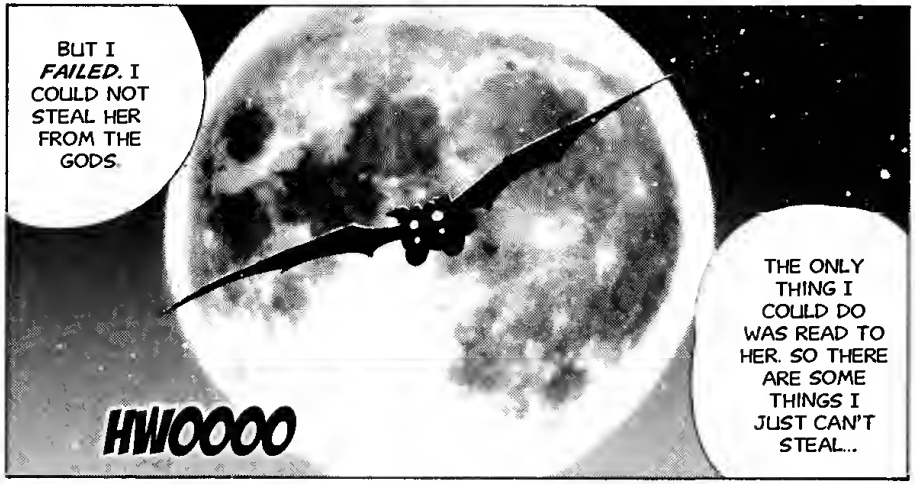

I FEEL REALLY GOOD TODAY. PLEASE CONTINUE THE STORY!
YOU'RE GREAT!
YOU'RE SO CUTE!
WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF I WAS THE ANGEL AND YOU WERE THE HUMAN?
I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF I'LL LIVE THAT LONG.
YOU GAVE ME YOUR WORD!


YOU GAVE ME YOUR WORD!!
TUP
...GOODBYE, LUNA.
IN THE END, YOU WERE...
FWSSH
BRM
BRM
NO! HE BEAT US AGAIN!!
BRM
BRM
BRM
THAT BRAT LE BREAD!!
DETECTIVE! EVERYONE INSIDE IS RECOVERING!!
ALL RIGHT, I'M COMING!
SO IT'S GONE!?
BLAST!
O-OH, NO... WHAT ABOUT MY DAUGHTER!?
IS SHE ALL RIGHT!?
WOOO
OOSH
LE BREAD ...
TMP
TMP
TMP
TMP
TMP
TMP
LUNA! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT!?



THE ANGEL'S WINGS... SHOULD BE RETURNED TO THE ANGEL...

NOW...THE ANGEL HAS TAKEN HER WINGS AND RETURNED TO THE GODS.


BUT I FAILED. I COULD NOT STEAL HER FROM THE GODS.
THE ONLY THING I COULD DO WAS READ TO HER. SO THERE ARE SOME THINGS I JUST CAN'T STEAL...
HWOOOO

THAT WAS WHEN...I UNDERSTOOD...EVERYTHING.

Case 25: CLOSED

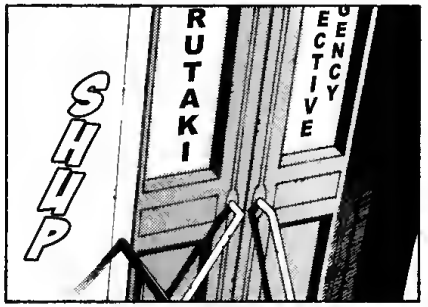
CASE TWENTY-SIX

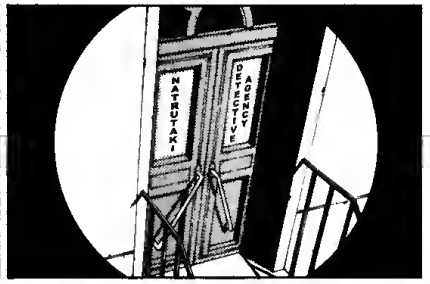
THE BARON'S BACK

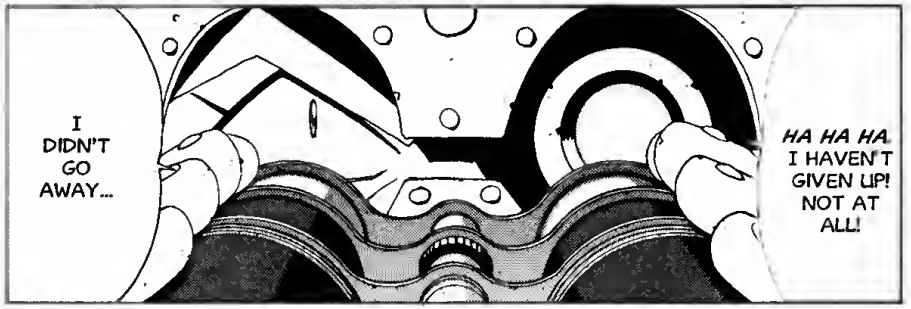
WE'RE HOME!

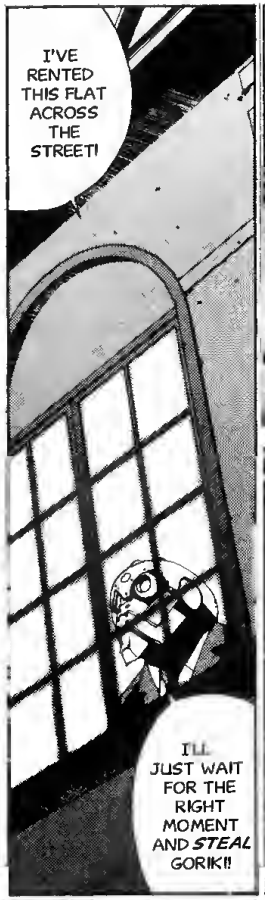
WELCOME BACK, SIR.
I'M TIRED.

HOW'S GORIKI?
GORIKI IS...

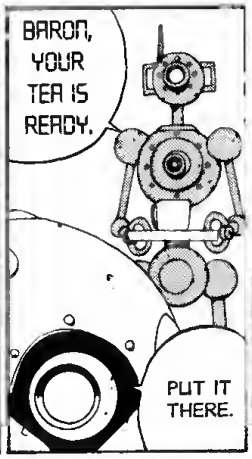

SHUP
RUTAKI
DETECTIVE AGENCY


NATSUTAKI
DETECTIVE AGENCY


I DIDN'T GO AWAY...
HA HA HA. I HAVEN'T GIVEN UP! NOT AT ALL!

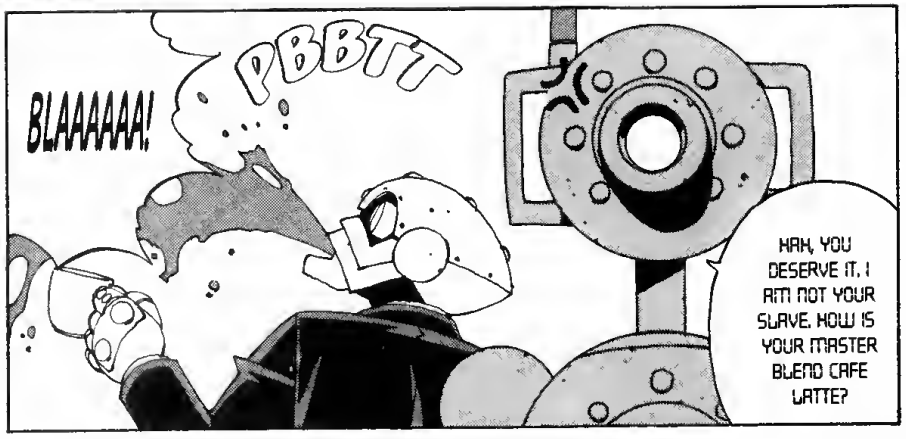

I'VE RENTED THIS FLAT ACROSS THE STREET!
I'LL JUST WAIT FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT AND STEAL GORIKI!

HA HA HA HA.

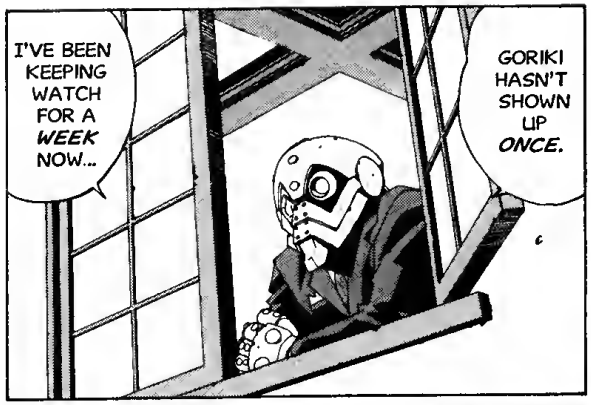

BARON, YOUR TEA IS READY.
PUT IT THERE.

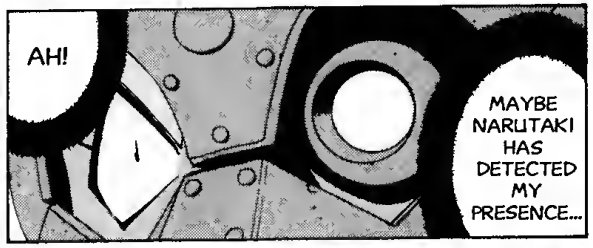
KLNK

SIPP
WHERE IS GORIKI...?


BLAAAAAA!
PBBTT
HAH, YOU DESERVE IT. I AM NOT YOUR SLAVE. HOW IS YOUR MASTER BLEND CAFE LATTE?

HWOOO

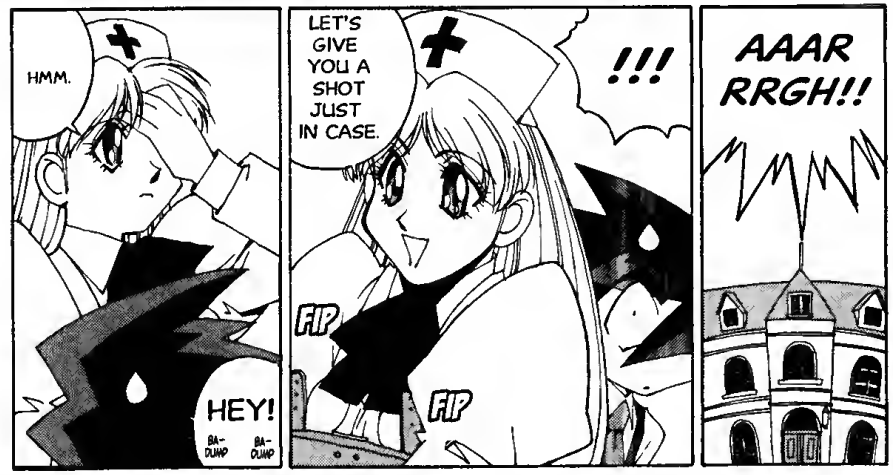

I'VE BEEN KEEPING WATCH FOR A WEEK NOW...
GORIKI HASN'T SHOWN UP ONCE.

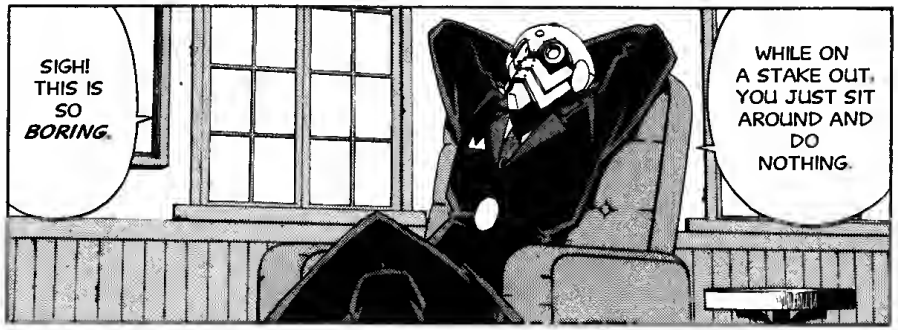

AH!
MAYBE NARUTAKI HAS DETECTED MY PRESENCE...

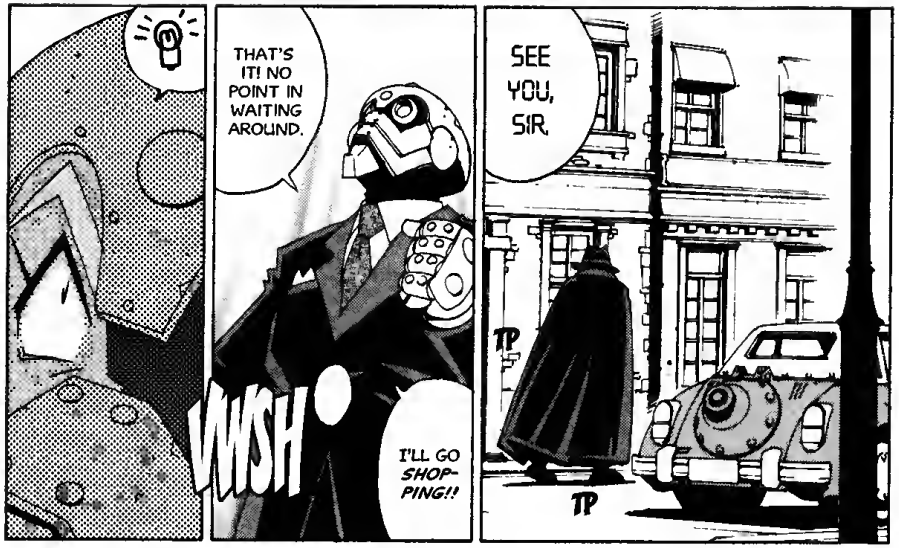
GRRR
...AND HIDDEN AWAY MY PRECIOUS GORIKI!!
WE BELONG TOGETHER!!
AH-CHOO!

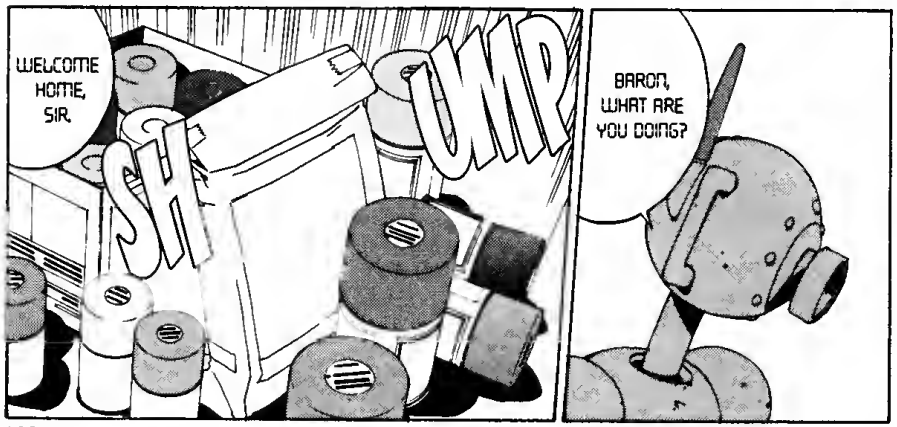
DID YOU CATCH A COLD?
I DON'T THINK SO. SOMEONE'S PROBABLY TALKING ABOUT ME.
STILL...
HM?

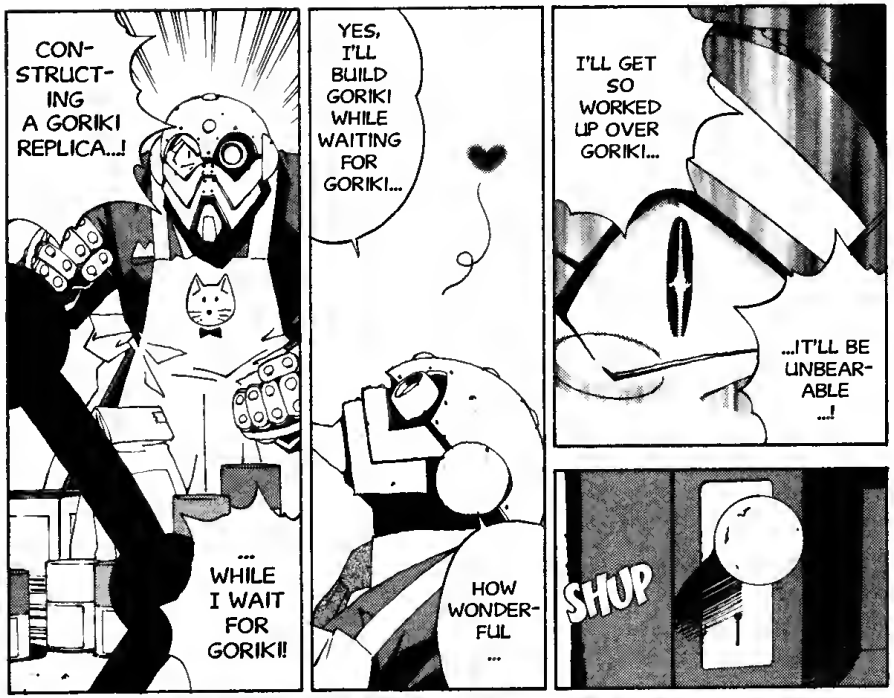
...PREVENTATIVE CARE WOULDN'T HURT.
FIP
UH... I GUESS...

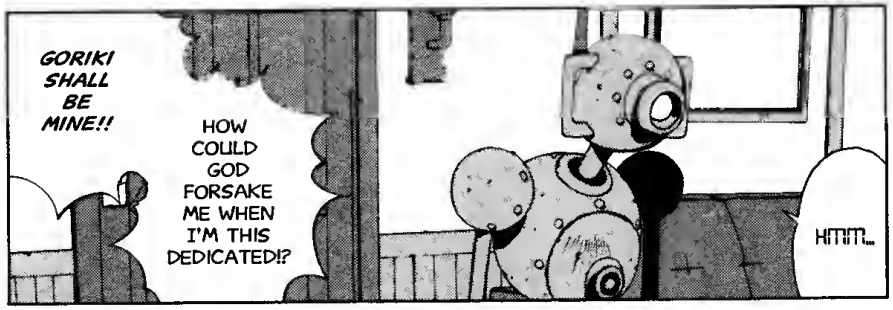

HMM.
HEY!
BA-DUMP
BA-DUMP
LET'S GIVE YOU A SHOT JUST IN CASE.
!!!
FIP
FIP
AAAR RRGH!!

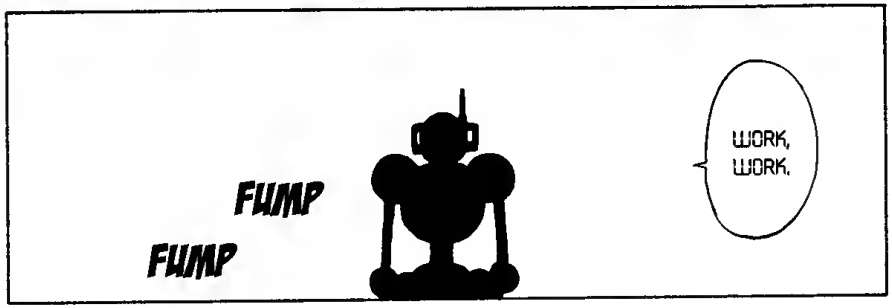

SIGH! THIS IS SO BORING.
WHILE ON A STAKE OUT, YOU JUST SIT AROUND AND DO NOTHING.

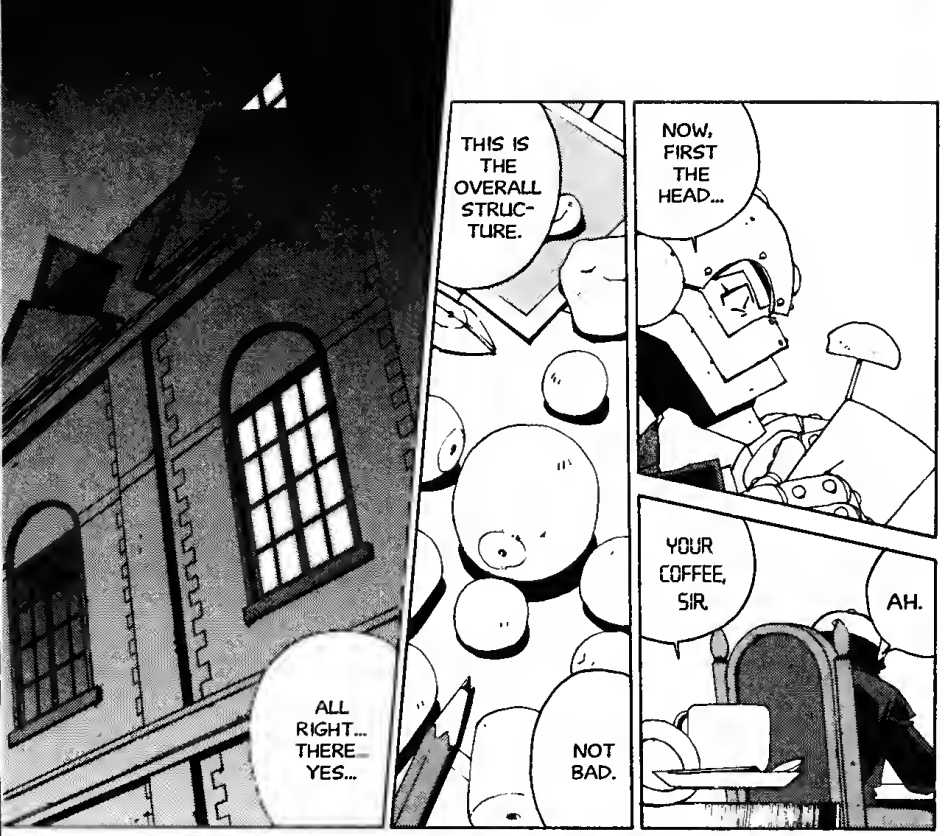

@
THAT'S IT! NO POINT IN WAITING AROUND.
VWSH
I'LL GO SHOPPING!!
SEE YOU, SIR.
TP
TP

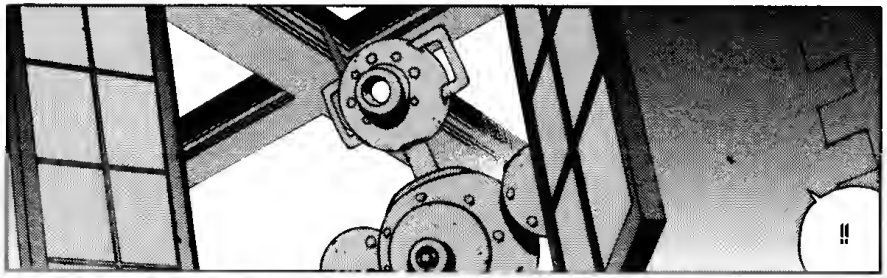

WELCOME HOME, SIR.
SH
UMP
BARON, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

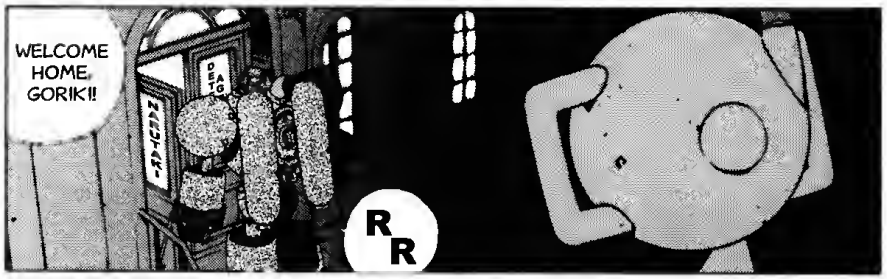

CONSTRUCTING A GORIKI REPLICA...!
...WHILE I WAIT FOR GORIKI!
YES, I'LL BUILD GORIKI WHILE WAITING FOR GORIKI...
HOW WONDERFUL ...
I'LL GET SO WORKED UP OVER GORIKI...
...IT'LL BE UNBEARABLE ...!
SHUP

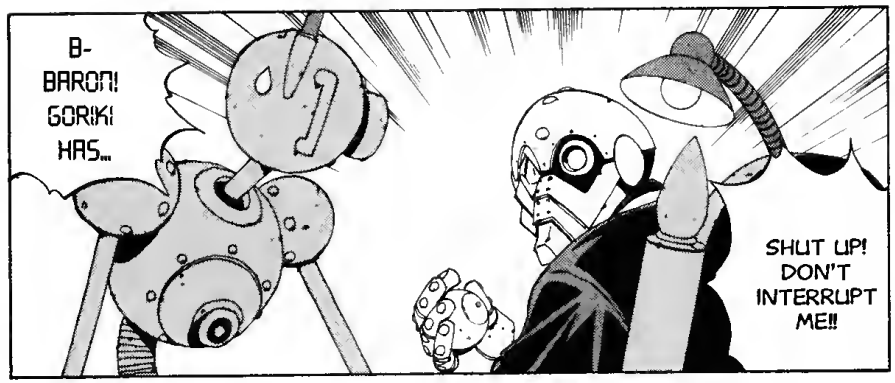

GORIKI SHALL BE MINE!!
HOW COULD GOD FORSAKE ME WHEN I'M THIS DEDICATED!?
HMM...


FUMP
FUMP
WORK, WORK.

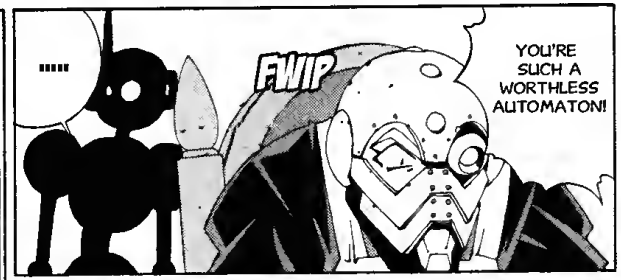

ALL RIGHT... THERE... YES...
THIS IS THE OVERALL STRUC-TURE.
NOT BAD.
NOW, FIRST THE HEAD...
YOUR COFFEE, SIR.
AH.

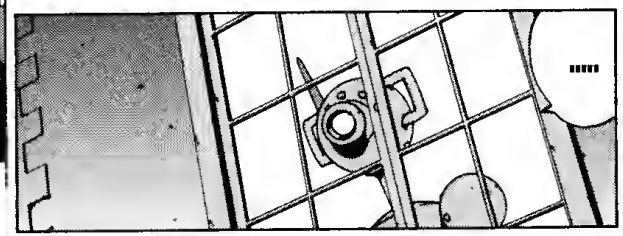

!!


WELCOME HOME, GORIK!!
R R

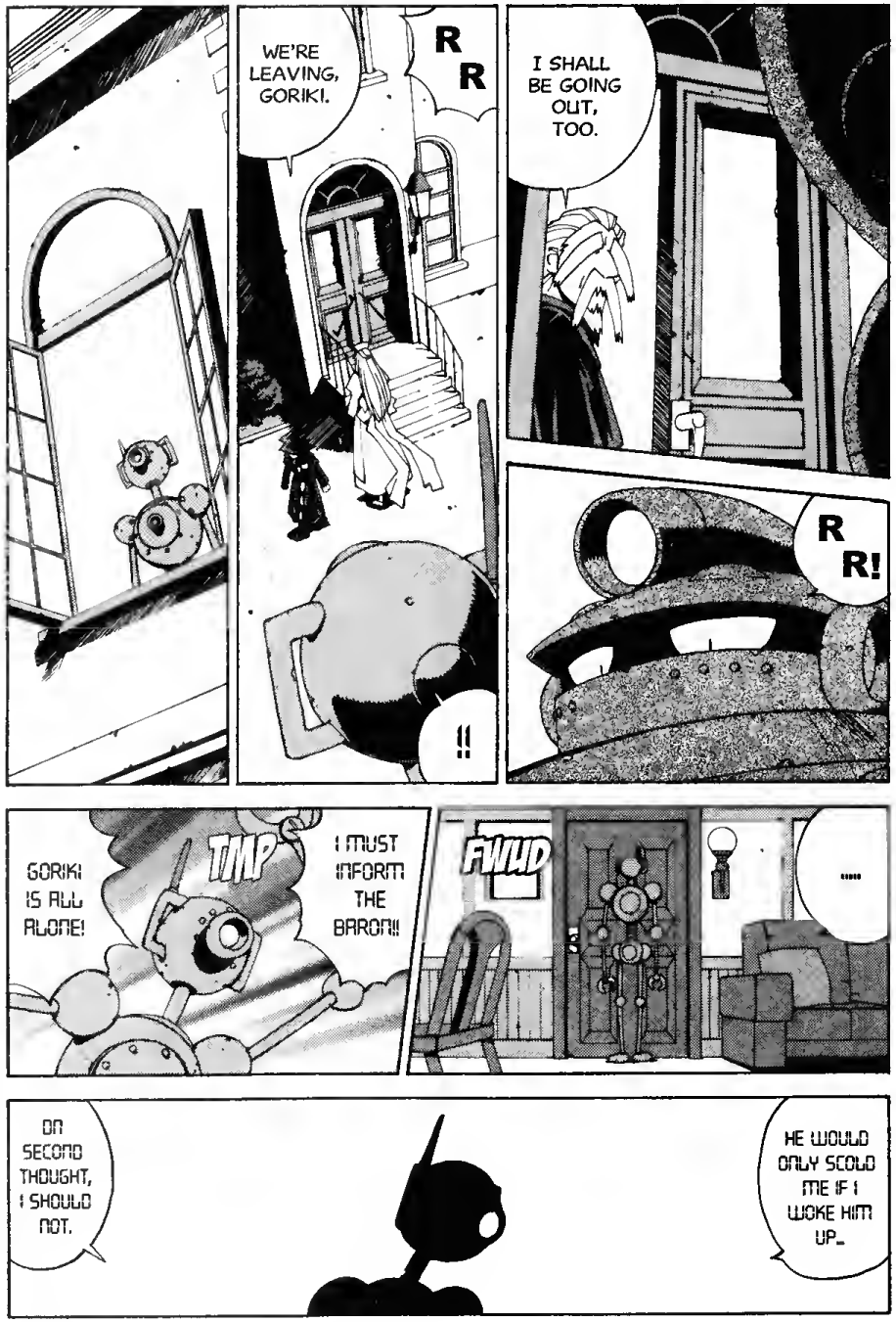

B-BARON! GORIK! HAS...
SHUT UP! DON'T INTERRUPT ME!!

I'VE GOT SERIOUS WORK TO DO!
YOU'D BETTER NOT TALK TO ME AGAIN!
Y-YES, SIR.

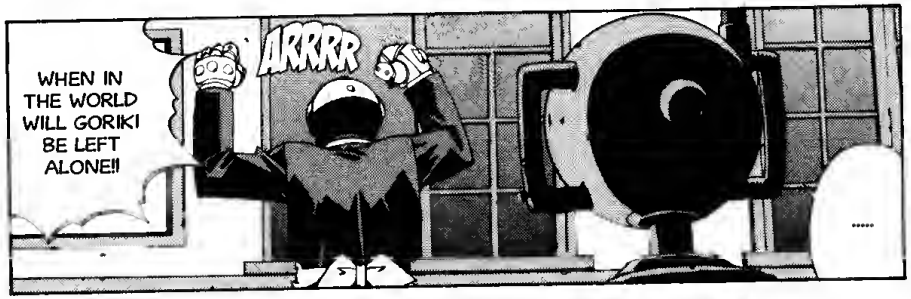

.....
FWIP
YOU'RE SUCH A WORTHLESS AUTOMATON!

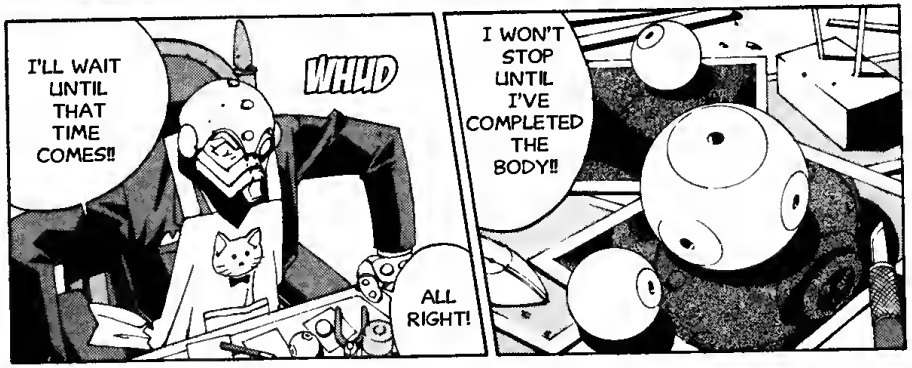

.....

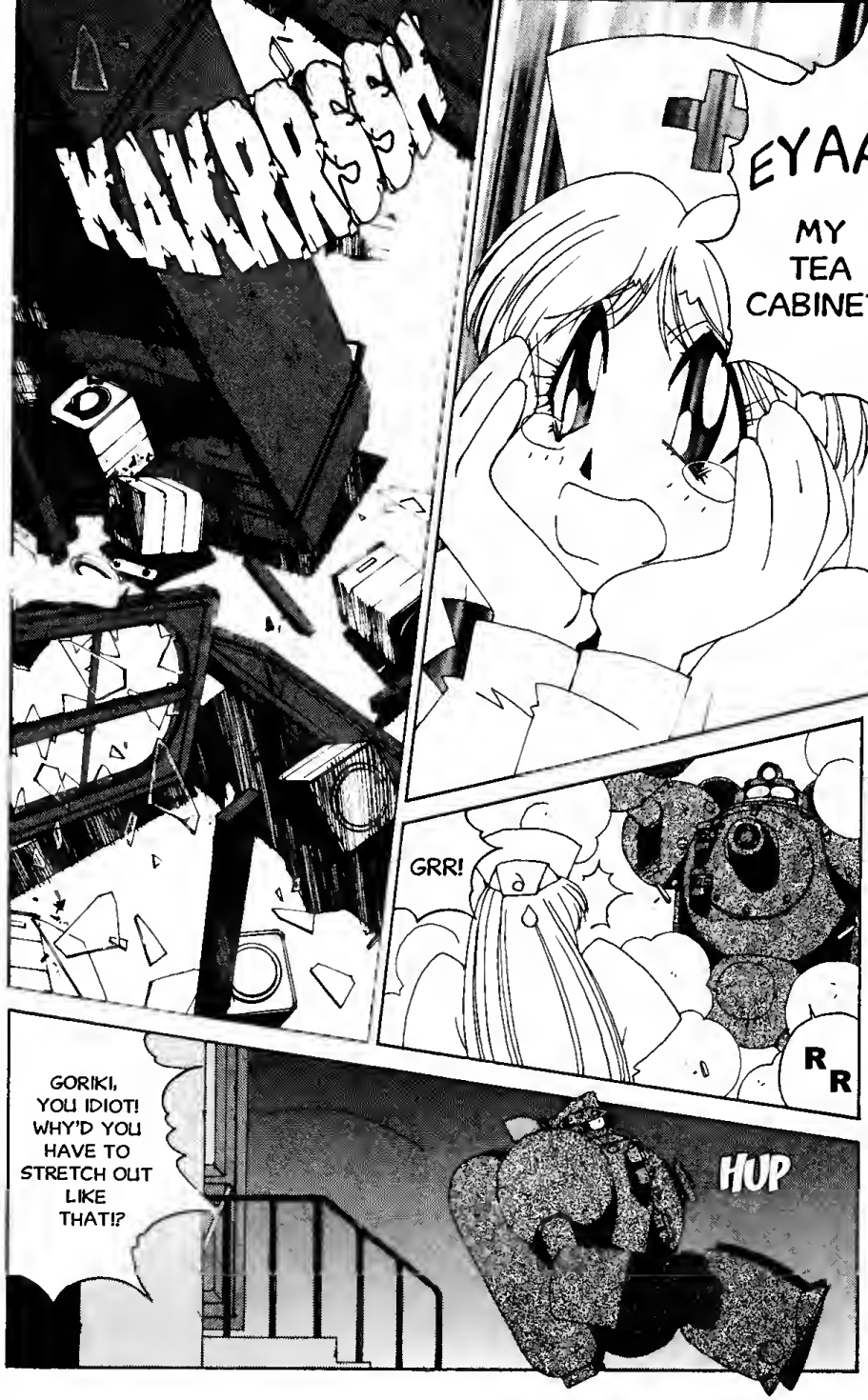
THE NEXT DAY...
WHOOOOO
FSH
FSH
HM-MMM.
IT'S PERFECT!!
I'VE COMPLETED THE HEAD, EVEN THOUGH I HAD TO PULL AN ALL-NIGHTER.
YAWN... SO TIRED
I NEED SOME SLEEP! DON'T WAKE ME, ALL RIGHT!!
YES, SIR.
SHUP

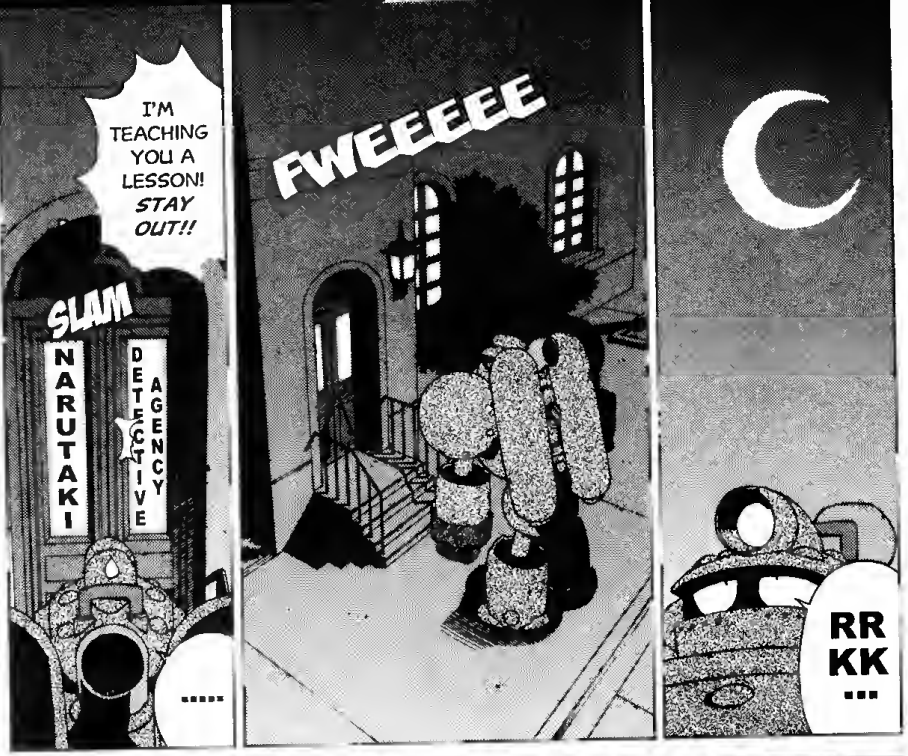

WE'RE LEAVING, GORIKI.
R R
!!
I SHALL BE GOING OUT, TOO.
R R!
GORIKI IS ALL ALONE!
TMP
I MUST INFORM THE BARON!!
FWUD
.....
ON SECOND THOUGHT, I SHOULD NOT.
HE WOULD ONLY SCOLD ME IF I WOKE HIM UP...

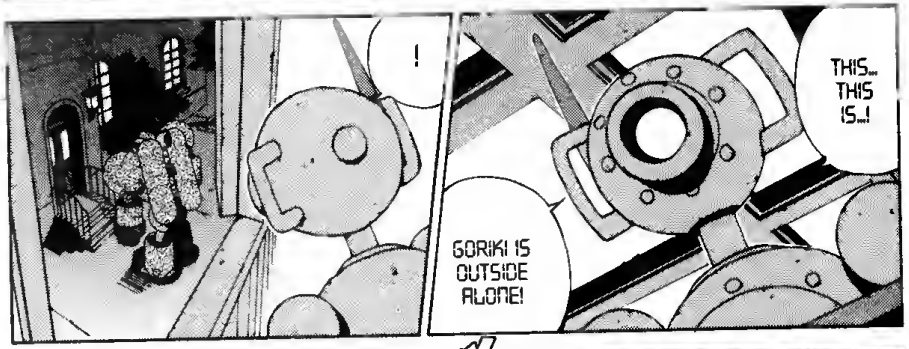
WE'RE HOME!
TINK
AH! I SLEPT WELL.
HMM. SO EVERY-ONE'S STILL WITH GORIK!!

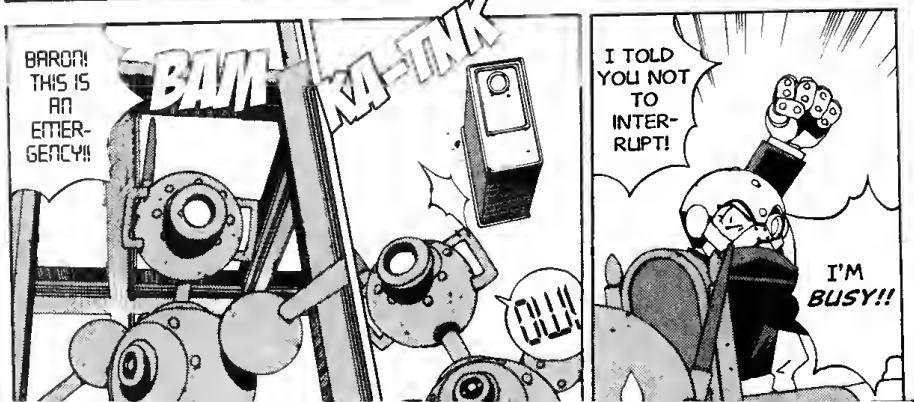

WHEN IN THE WORLD WILL GORIK! BE LEFT ALONE!!
ARRRR
.....

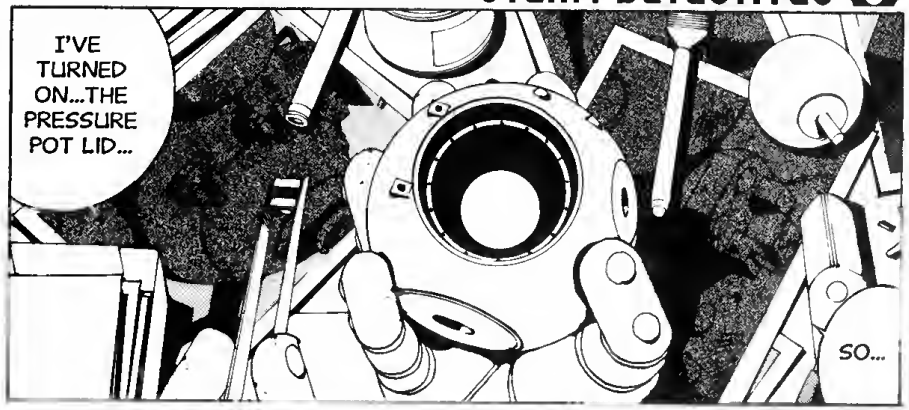

I'LL WAIT UNTIL THAT TIME COMES!!
WHUD
I WON'T STOP UNTIL I'VE COMPLETED THE BODY!!
ALL RIGHT!

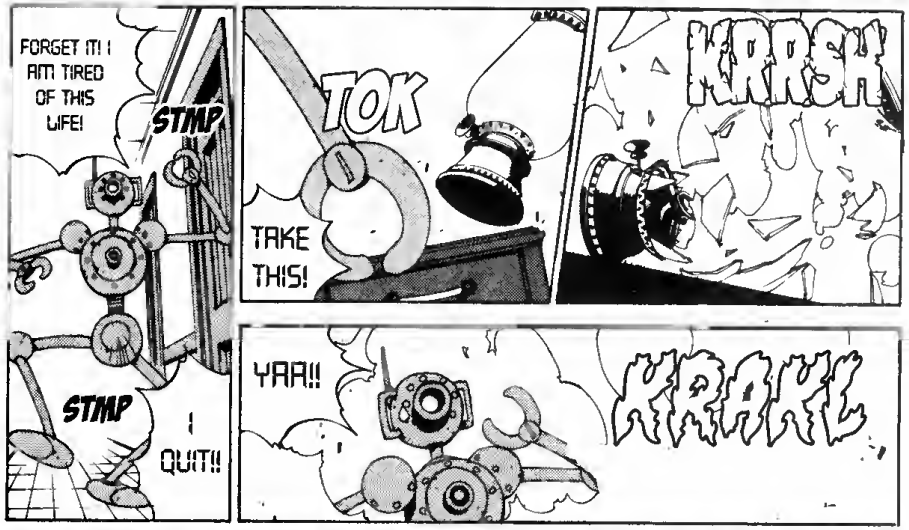

KAKRRSH
EYAA!
MY TEA CABINET!
GRR!
RR
GORIKI, YOU IDIOT! WHY'D YOU HAVE TO STRETCH OUT LIKE THAT!?
HUP

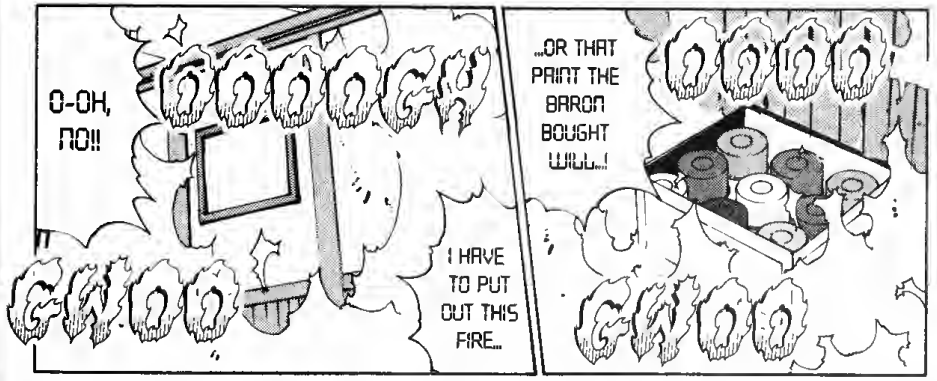

I'M TEACHING YOU A LESSON! STAY OUT!!
SLAM
NARUTAKI DETECTIVE AGENCY
.....
FWEEEEE
RR KK ...


!
GORIKI IS OUTSIDE ALONE!
THIS... THIS IS...!


BARON! THIS IS AN EMERGENCY!!
BAM
KA-TNK
BLU
I TOLD YOU NOT TO INTERRUPT!
I'M BUSY!!


I'VE TURNED ON...THE PRESSURE POT LID...
SO...


FORGET IT! I AM TIRED OF THIS LIFE!
STMP
STMP
I QUIT!!
TOK
TAKE THIS!
KRRSH
YAA!!
KRAKZ


O-OH, NO!!
GOOOOGH
GNOO
I HAVE TO PUT OUT THIS FIRE...
...OR THAT PRINT THE BARON BOUGHT WILL...!
OOOOO
GNOO

BARON!
BARON!!
HMMMMM
KRIK
KRIK
KRIK
.....
MACHINE BARON!!
HUMPH
WHAT IS IT!?
UH...
WE SHOULD ESCAPE NOW.
YAAAA-AAAAH!
THIS WAY!
HURRY!
RUN!
HAS EVERYONE BEEN EVACUATED!?
NO, THE OCCUPANTS IN ROOM 204...

WHAT'S THAT!?
WE HAVE TO RESCUE THEM!!
KA-FUMP
KA-FUMP
R
R
KA-FUMP
KA-FUMP
GORIK!!
GWOOOGH
GORIK!!!
BARON! WE CAN NOT GET OUT NOW!!
SHUT UP, I KNOW THAT.
I CAN'T LET THIS LAME FIRE KILL ME WITHOUT COMPLETING MY BELOVED GORIKI REPLICA...
GWOOGH
UNGH... I CAN'T... BREATHE...
I...I'M FINISHED ...
THUD
BARON!

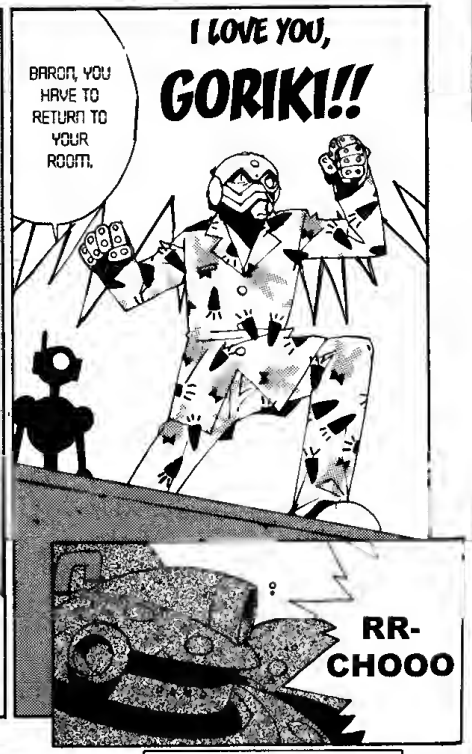
WHAM
RR!!
G...
GORIKI!!
I KNEW YOU'D BE THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD RESCUE ME...
I LOVE YOU, GORIKI!

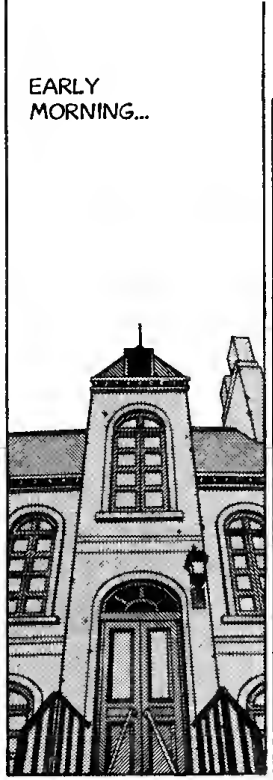
WE'RE LUCKY... NO ONE WAS INJURED EVEN THOUGH THE BUILDING BURNT DOWN TO THE GROUND.
THAT'S TRUE.

ONE PERSON HAD LIGHT BURNS THOUGH...
YES...

I WONDER HOW THE MACHINE BARON IS.

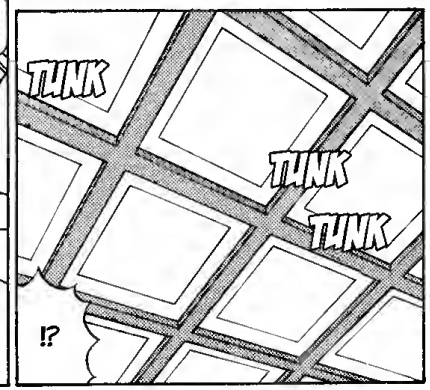
I HAVE TO TAKE YOUR TEMPER-ATURE...
HUH?

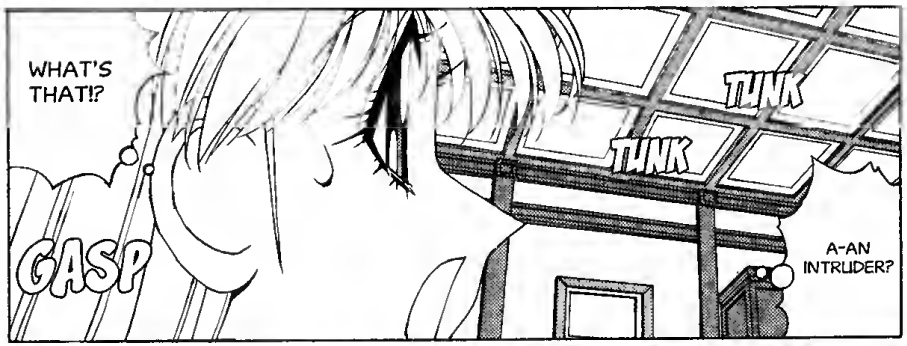

I LOVE YOU, GORIKI!!
BARON, YOU HAVE TO RETURN TO YOUR ROOM.
RR-CHOOO

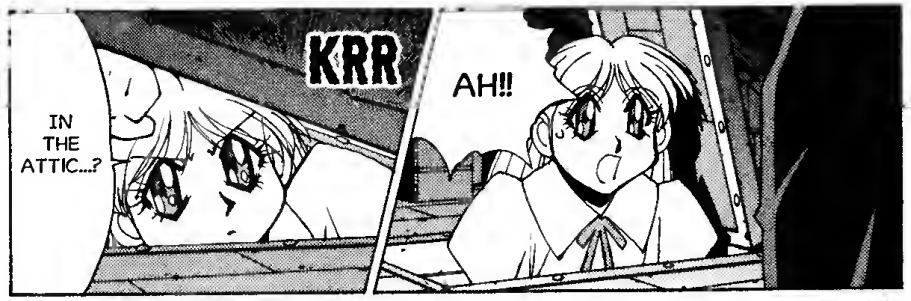

EARLY MORNING...

HMM-MMM...

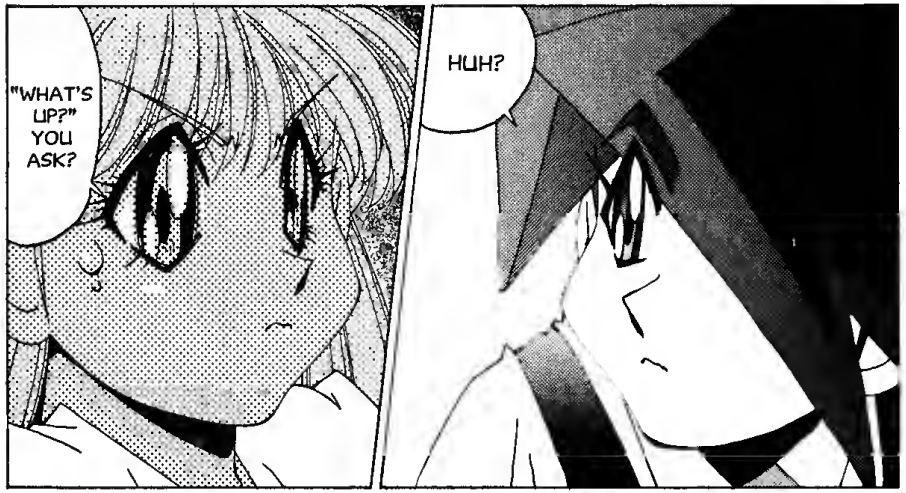
HUH...?

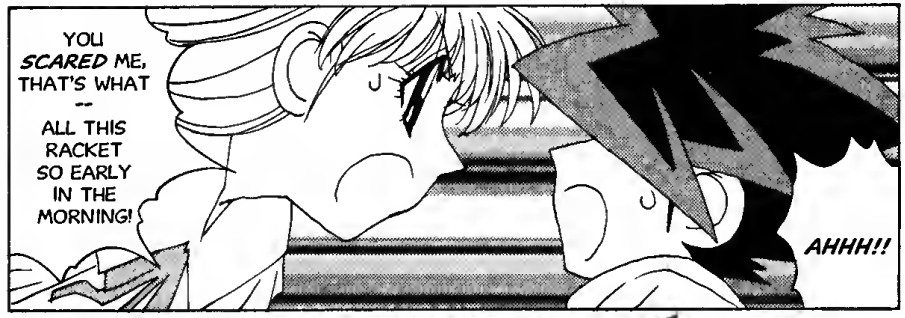

TUNK
TUNK
TUNK
!?


WHAT'S THAT!?
TUNK
TUNK
GASP
A-AN INTRUDER?


IN THE ATTIC...?
KRR
AH!!

OH, HI, LING LING.
WHAT'S UP?
CASE TWENTY-SEVEN
NARUTAKI'S MEMORY


"WHAT'S UP?" YOU ASK?
HUH?


YOU *SCARED* ME, THAT'S WHAT -- ALL THIS RACKET SO EARLY IN THE MORNING!
AHHH!!

KA BAM

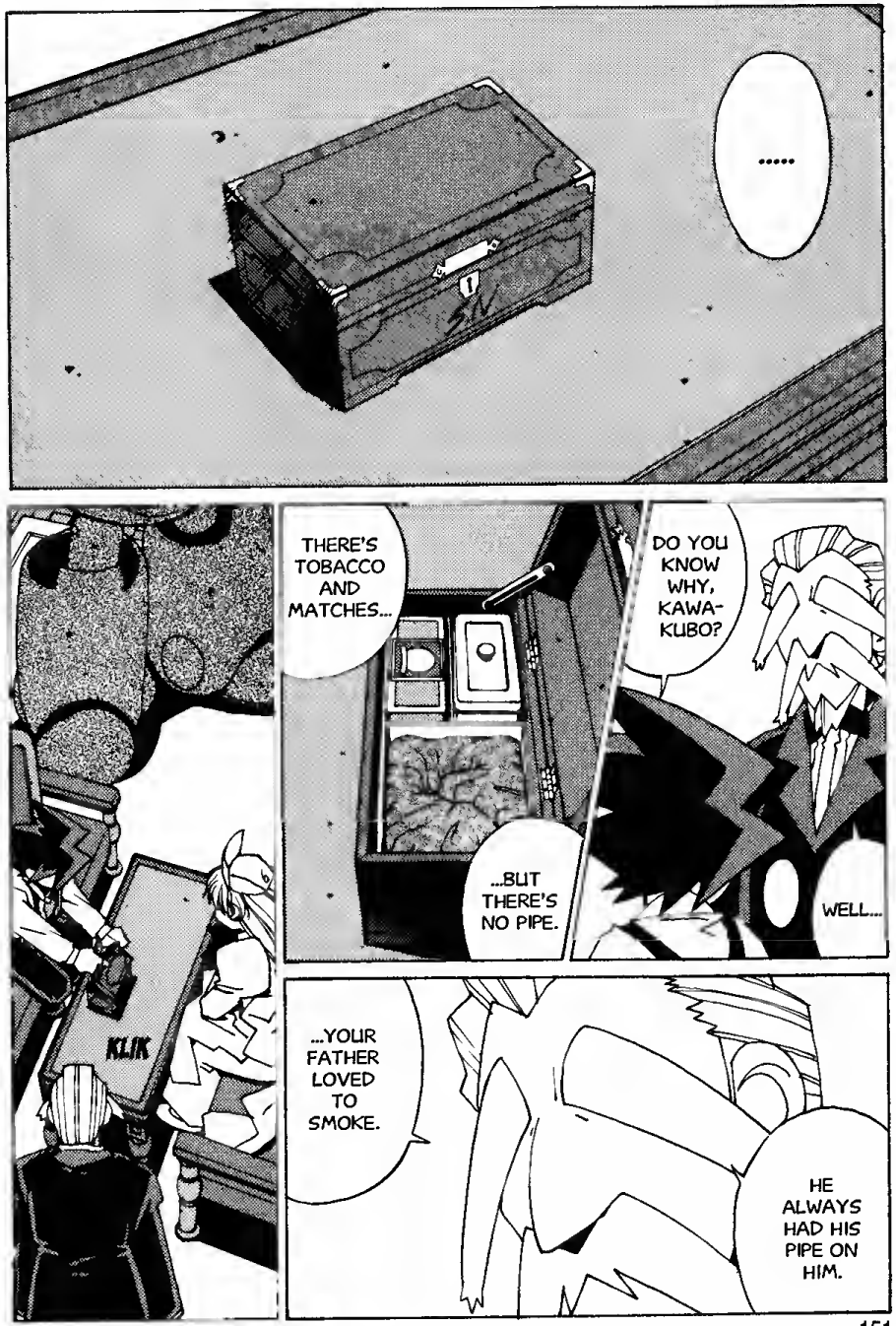
OUCH!
NARUTAK!!!

TONK
OUCH!

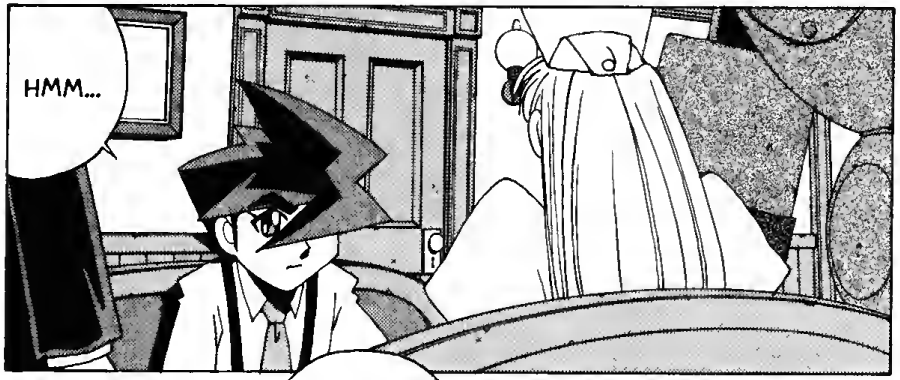
OW, OW, OW...
PLOP

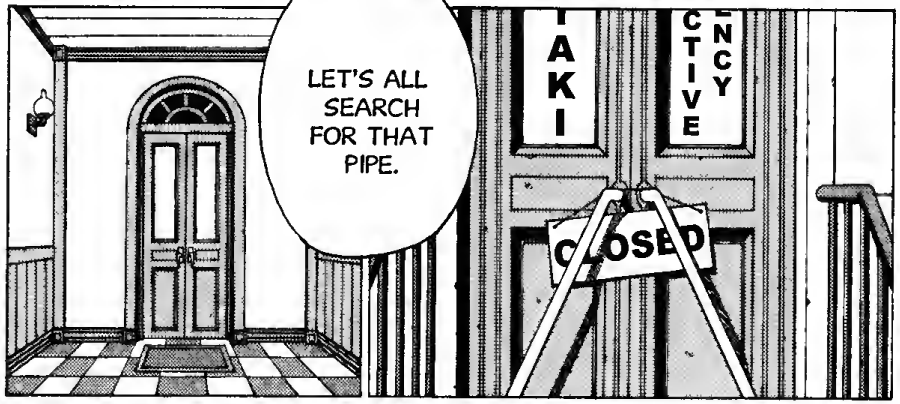
AH, HA... I FOUND IT!
I WAS LOOKING FOR THIS DRILL! # 12...

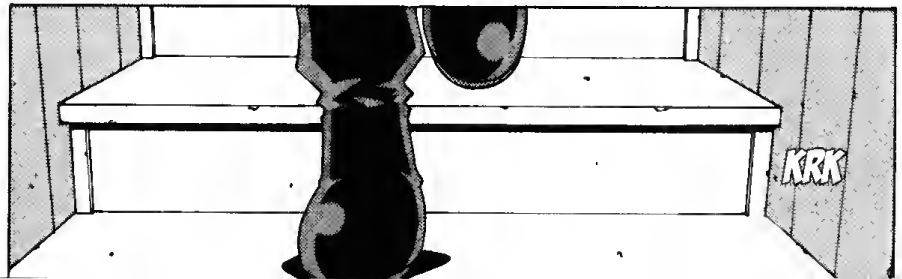
WHAT'S THIS...?
WHAT IS IT... NARU-TAKI?
IT'S A PIPE CASE. IT'S GOT INITIALS...
S.N. ...
S.N
!!
THE SAME AS MY FATHER'S ...
WHAT?

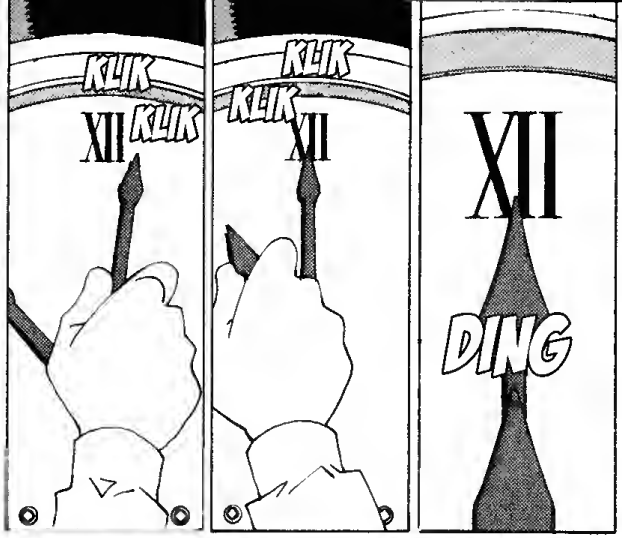

.....
S.N
KLIK
THERE'S TOBACCO AND MATCHES...
...BUT THERE'S NO PIPE.
DO YOU KNOW WHY, KAWA-KUBO?
WELL...
...YOUR FATHER LOVED TO SMOKE.
HE ALWAYS HAD HIS PIPE ON HIM.

HE MUST HAVE CHERISHED IT.
BUT WHY IS THE PIPE...
...THE ONLY MISSING ITEM HERE...?


HMM...


LET'S ALL SEARCH FOR THAT PIPE.
CLOSED


KRK


KLIK
KLIK
XII
KLIK
KLIK
XII
XII
DING

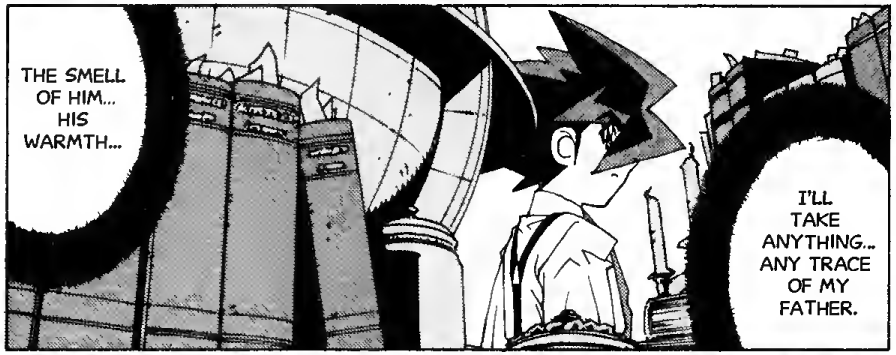
BO
NG

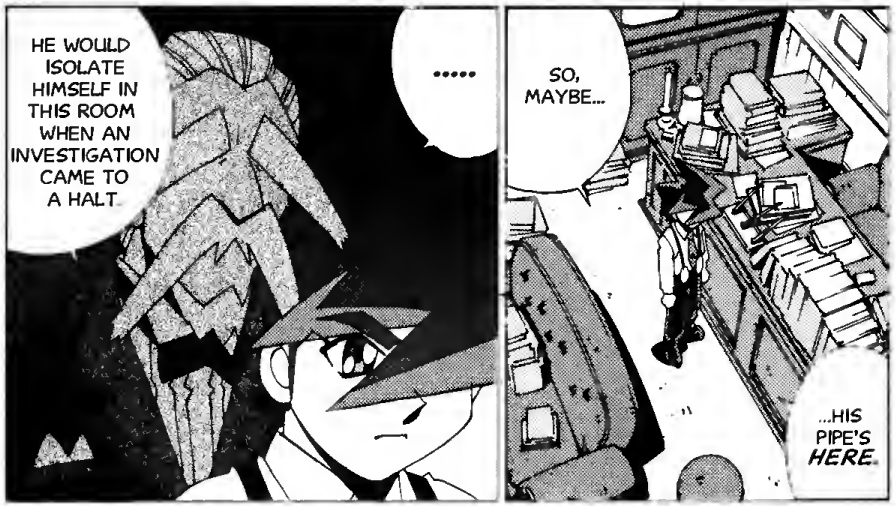
.....

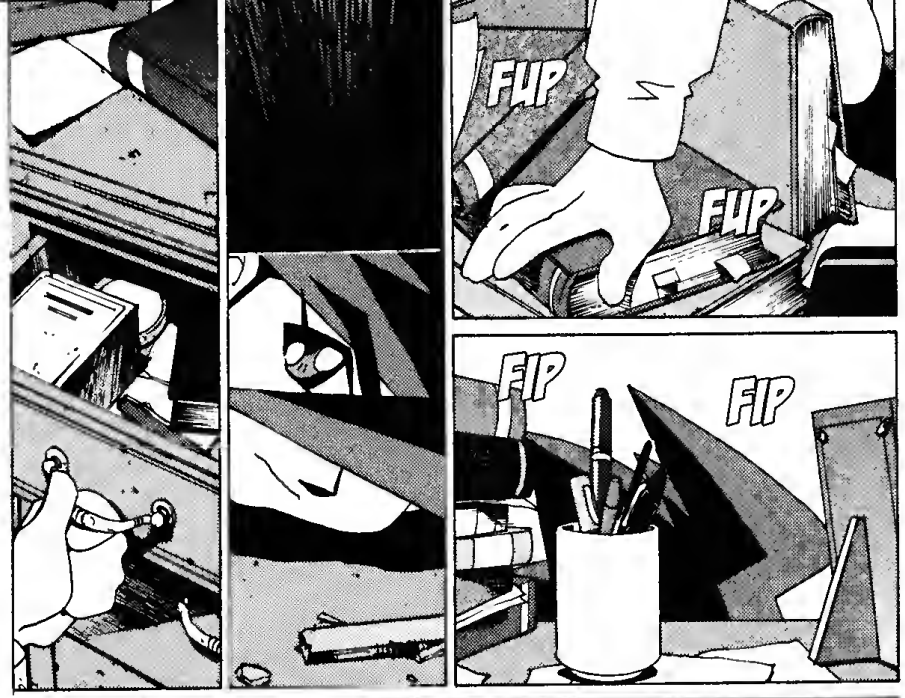
SOICHIRO NARUTAKI... MY FATHER WAS THE BEST DETECTIVE IN STEAM CITY...
HE WAS HONORABLE. ALWAYS FIGHTING AGAINST EVIL.
I NEVER KNEW HIM... I LEARNED ABOUT HIM FROM KAWAKUBO...
HE WANTED THE CITY TO BE SAFE. ITS CITIZENS HAPPY IN HIS PURSUIT OF JUSTICE.

HE'S MY ROLE MODEL... MY HERO.
I'M SO PROUD OF MY FATHER.

KA CHAK

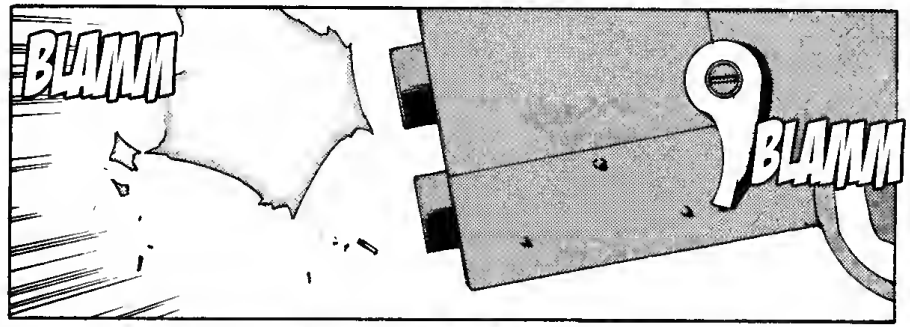

THE SMELL OF HIM... HIS WARMTH...
I'LL TAKE ANYTHING... ANY TRACE OF MY FATHER.

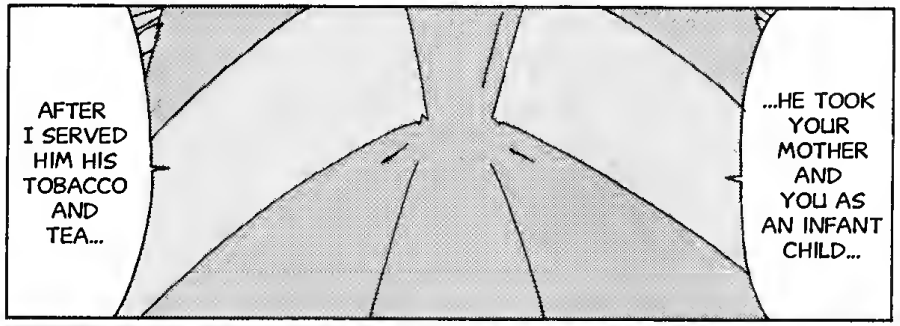

HE WOULD ISOLATE HIMSELF IN THIS ROOM WHEN AN INVESTIGATION CAME TO A HALT.
.....
SO, MAYBE...
...HIS PIPE'S HERE.


FLIP
FLIP
FIP
FIP

KAWAKUBO, DO YOU REMEMBER THE LAST TIME MY FATHER USED HIS PIPE?

IT WAS...
HM?
...THAT... TRAGIC NIGHT, SIR...
!

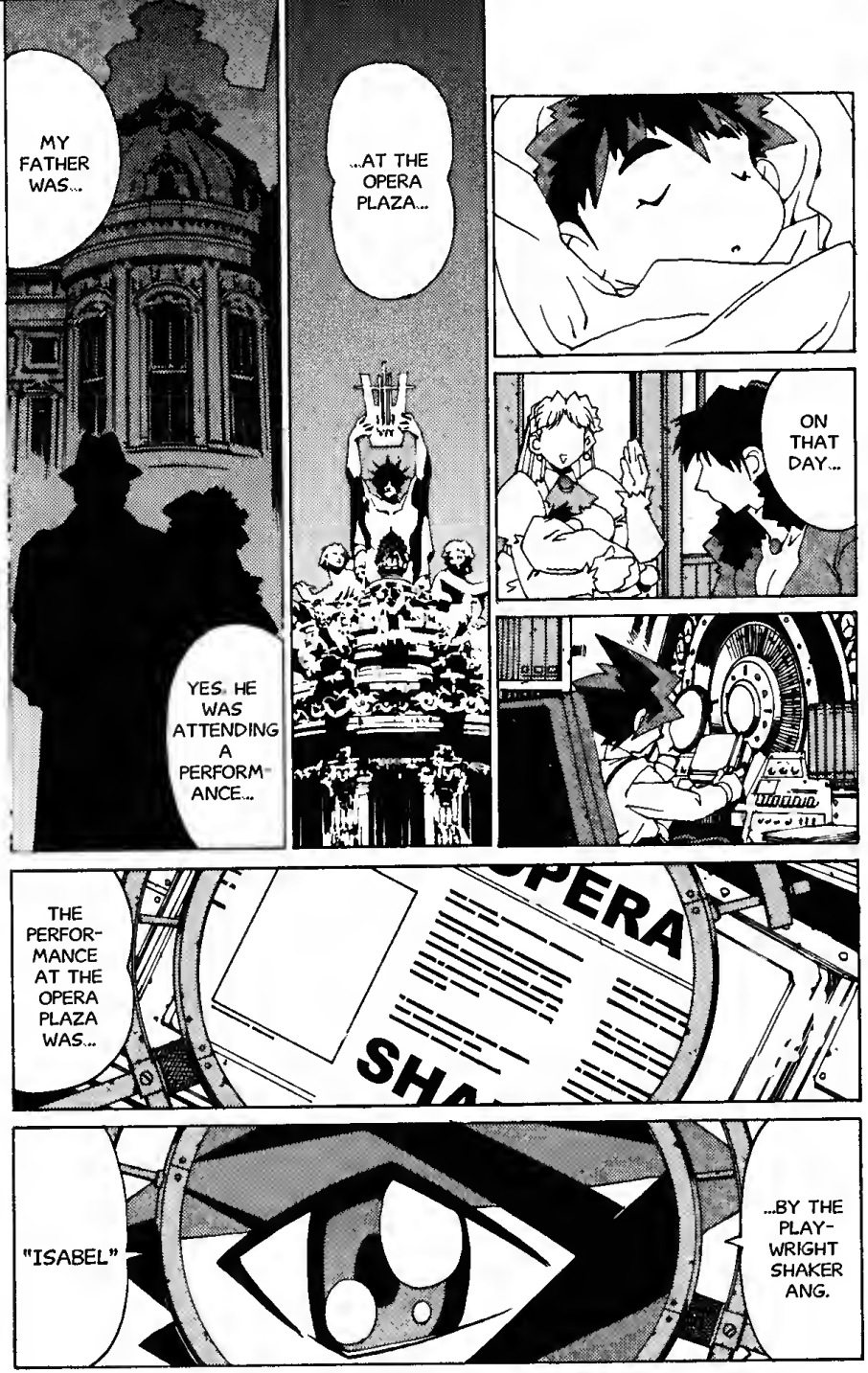

BLAMM
BLAMM


AFTER I SERVED HIM HIS TOBACCO AND TEA...
...HE TOOK YOUR MOTHER AND YOU AS AN INFANT CHILD...

THERE WAS NO PIPE FOUND ON HIM...
.....
WHY DIDN'T MY FATHER TAKE HIS PIPE...?

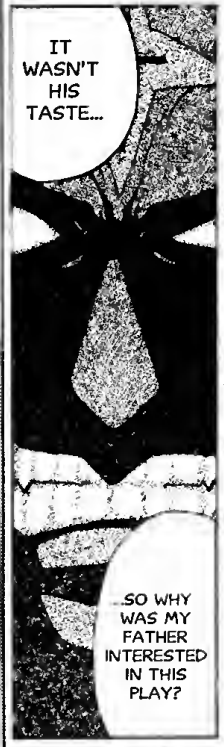
WELL...I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHY, SIR.
WAS IT A WHIM OR AN ACCIDENT ...?
I GUESS YOU'D HAVE TO BE HIM TO KNOW.
YOUR FATHER OFTEN SAID...
...AS HE PUFFED SMOKE FROM HIS PIPE...
"KAWAKUBO, A DETECTIVE HAS TO BE SO IMAGINATIVE HE'S ALMOST CAPABLE OF COMMITTING THEFT OR MURDER *HIMSELF*."
"YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE THE NUMBER OF PERFECT CRIMES I'VE IMAGINED."

"I'M ALWAYS COMING UP WITH THE BEST METHOD TO COMMIT EACH CRIME I ENCOUNTER."
"IN ORDER TO DO THAT, I HAVE TO ASSUME THE ROLE OF A SERIAL MURDERER OR THIEF. I CAN'T MAKE ANY PROGRESS WITHOUT GRASPING THE OPPONENT'S MIND."
YOUR FATHER WAS AN EXPERT IN CRIMINAL PSYCHOLOGY.
...ALL THOSE DIFFICULT CASES...
...WERE SOLVED BY NARUTAKI'S FATHER.
THAT WAS HOW...
THE OPPONENT'S MIND...


MY FATHER WAS...
...AT THE OPERA PLAZA...
YES. HE WAS ATTENDING A PERFORM-ANCE...
ON THAT DAY...
THE PERFOR-MANCE AT THE OPERA PLAZA WAS...
"ISABEL"
...BY THE PLAY-WRIGHT SHAKER ANG.

NURSERY
KACHAK
MAYBE ...
...MY FATHER THOUGHT THAT HE WAS IN DANGER...
THERE'S SOMETHING ODD ABOUT THAT PIPE...
HERE IT IS.
THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SHAKER ANG.
"ISABEL" SHOULD BE IN THIS VOLUME...
SH
UMP

"ISABEL" IS A STORY OF LOVE AND BETRAYAL.


IT WASN'T HIS TASTE...
...SO WHY WAS MY FATHER INTERESTED IN THIS PLAY?

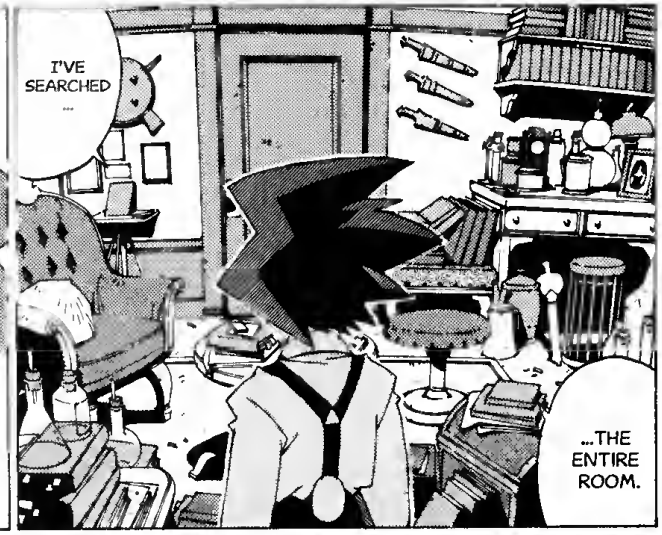
A BOOK-MARK...

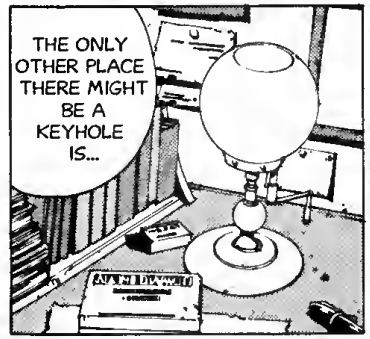
!

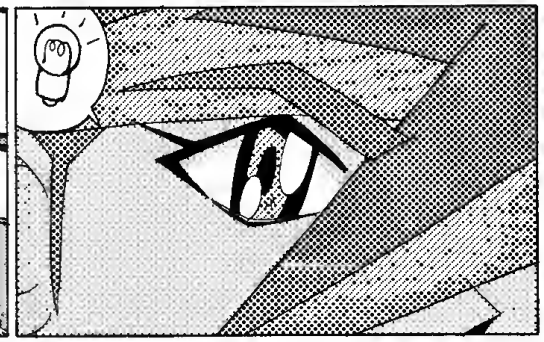
IT'S...

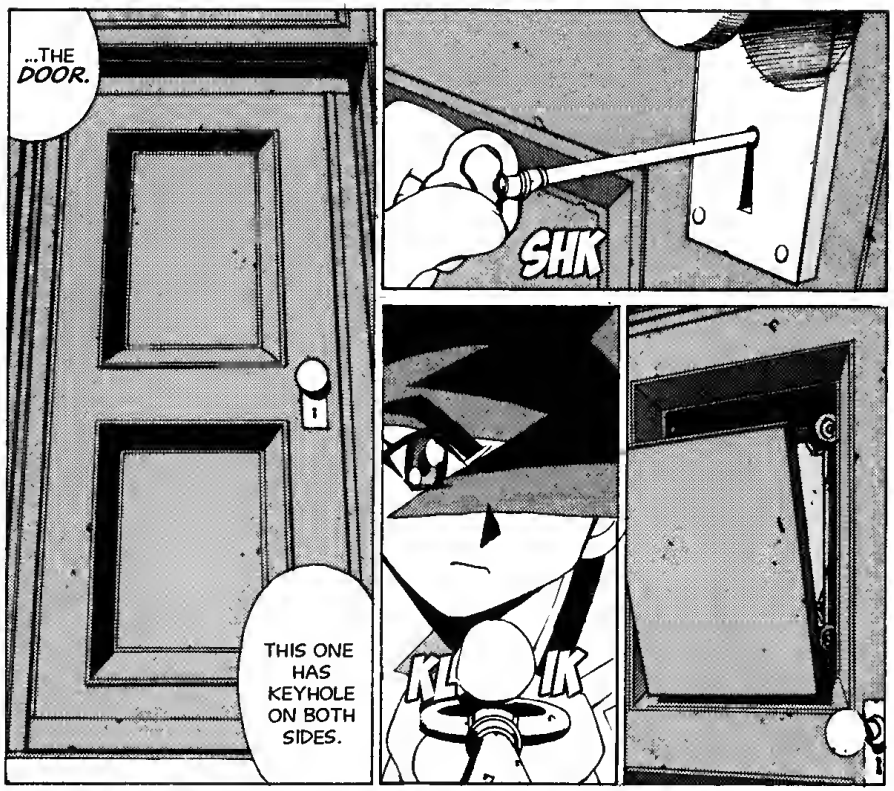
...A KEY!
...BUT FOR *WHAT?*

I MEAN, THERE'S NO DRAWER WITH A KEYHOLE IN THIS OFFICE.


I'VE SEARCHED ...
...THE ENTIRE ROOM.

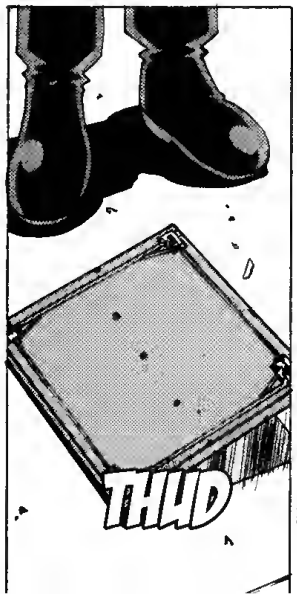

THE ONLY OTHER PLACE THERE MIGHT BE A KEYHOLE IS...



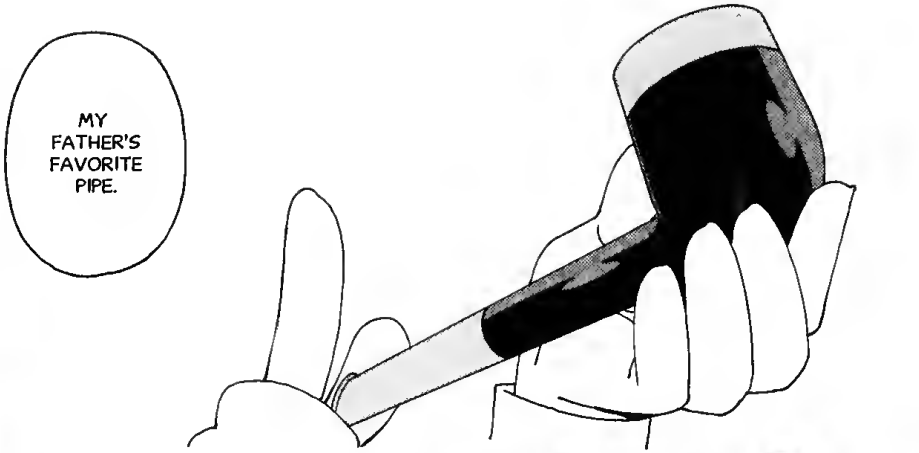

...THE DOOR.
THIS ONE HAS KEYHOLE ON BOTH SIDES.

SHK

KL IK


THUD

THERE IT IS.

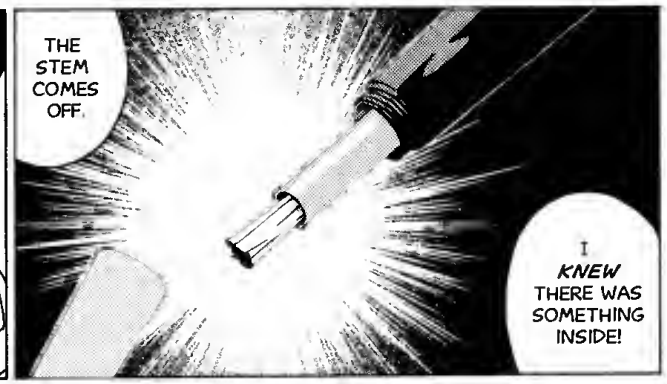

MY FATHER'S FAVORITE PIPE.

IT SEEMS NORMAL.
BUT...

DO YOU SEE SOME-THING?
YES.

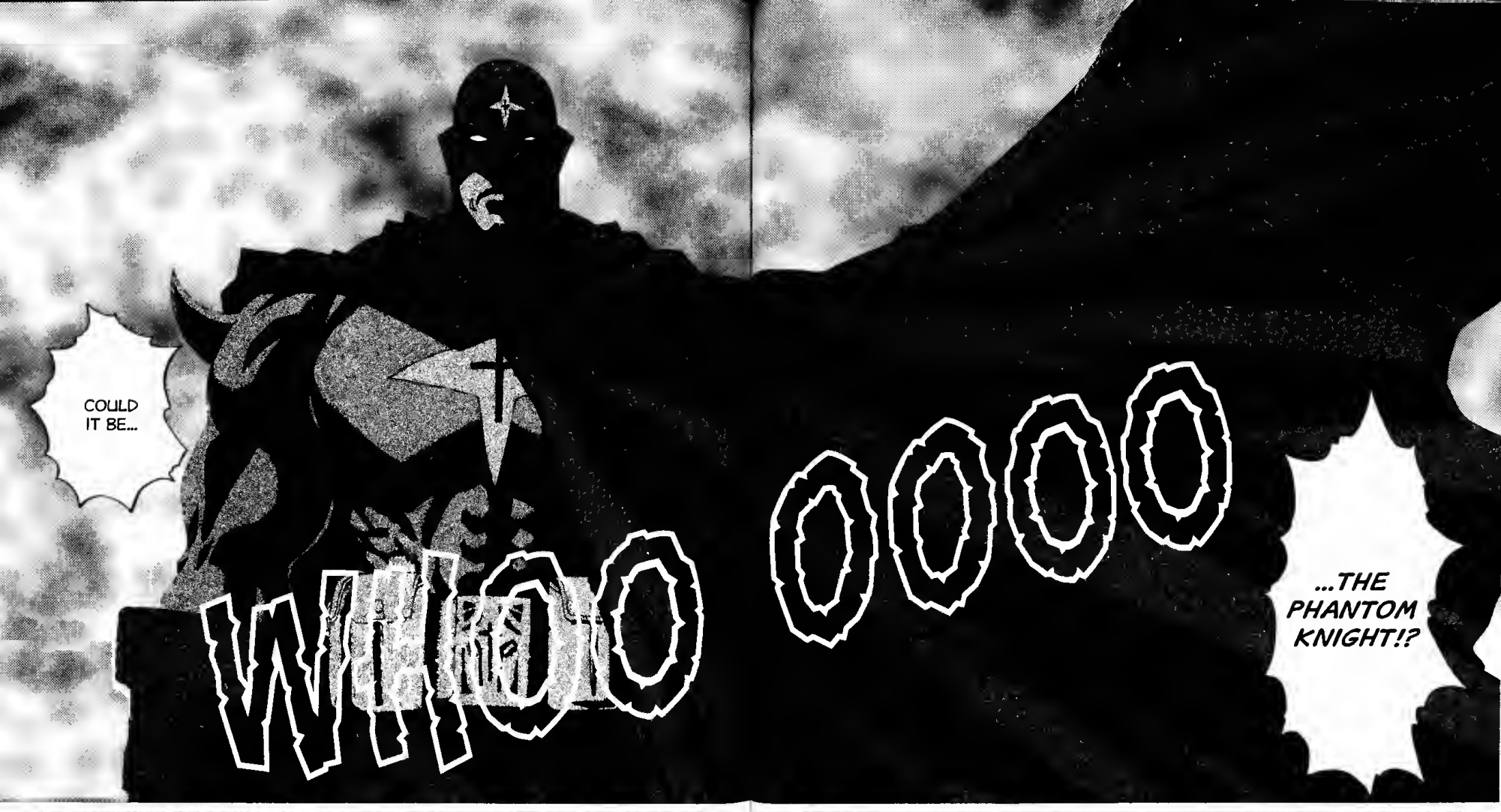
IT IS A NORMAL PIPE.
BUT HE MUST HAVE HIDDEN IT FOR A REASON.

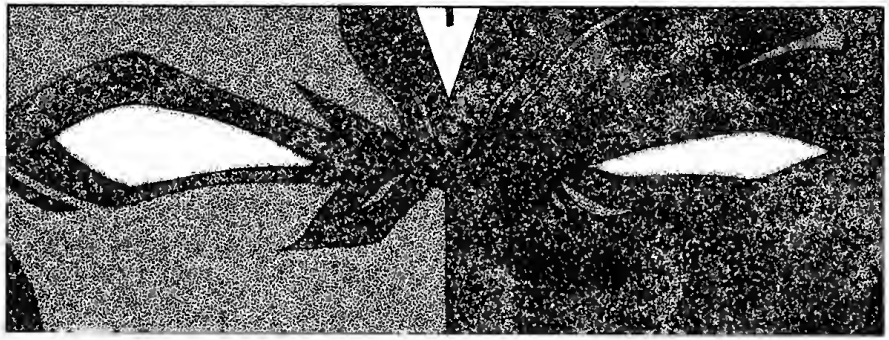
CHK

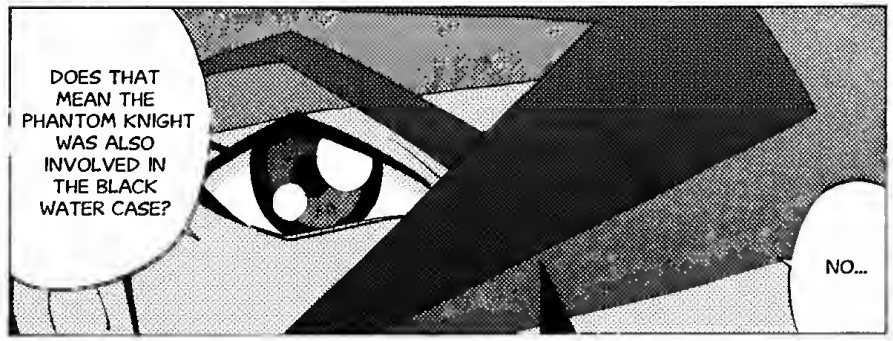

THE STEM COMES OFF.
I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING INSIDE!

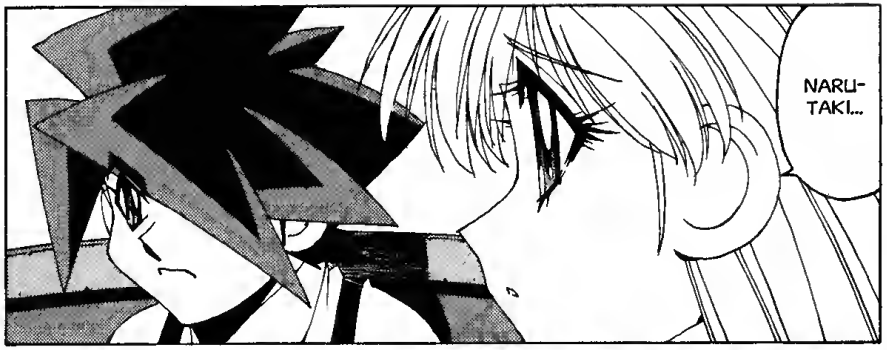
IT'S WHAT I'D HAVE DONE.
LIKE MY FATHER.
HALF OF IT'S BEEN TORN OFF.
WHAT IS THIS?
THIS IS...!
KAWA-KUBO. LOOK!!
COULD IT BE!?
SIR... COULD THIS BE...!
YES, IT IS!

I'M CERTAIN THIS IS THE FORMULA FOR THE BANNED SUBSTANCE "DEVIL'S WATER."
HOW'D IT END UP IN MY FATHER'S HANDS?
THIS MUST BE EVIDENCE FOR "THE BLACK WATER CASE"...
THE CASE THAT ESTABLISHED YOUR FATHER'S REPUTATION!
!!
ON THE BACK...
THE INITIAL P!!

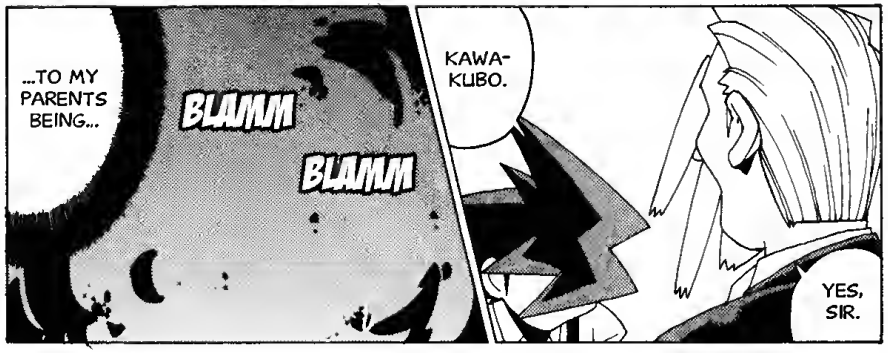

COULD IT BE...
WHOO
OOOO
...THE PHANTOM KNIGHT!?



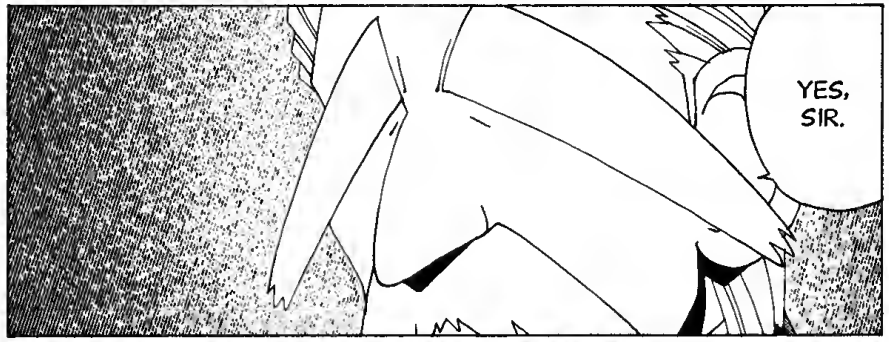

DOES THAT MEAN THE PHANTOM KNIGHT WAS ALSO INVOLVED IN THE BLACK WATER CASE?
NO...


NARU-
TAKI...

STEAM CITY'S DEMON OF DARKNESS...
THE PHANTOM KNIGHT! COULD IT HAVE BEEN THE BLACK WATER CASE THAT LED...


...TO MY PARENTS BEING...
BLAMM
BLAMM
KAWA-
KUBO.
YES, SIR.

LOOKS LIKE I'LL HAVE TO LOOK INTO THE DETAILS OF THIS BLACK WATER CASE.


YES, SIR.

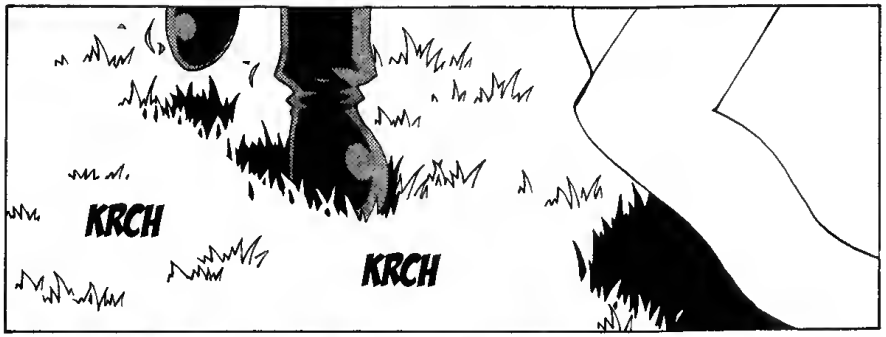
.....

FWEEEEE

!

OH, HELLO, YOU TWO.
IT'S SUPPER-TIME.

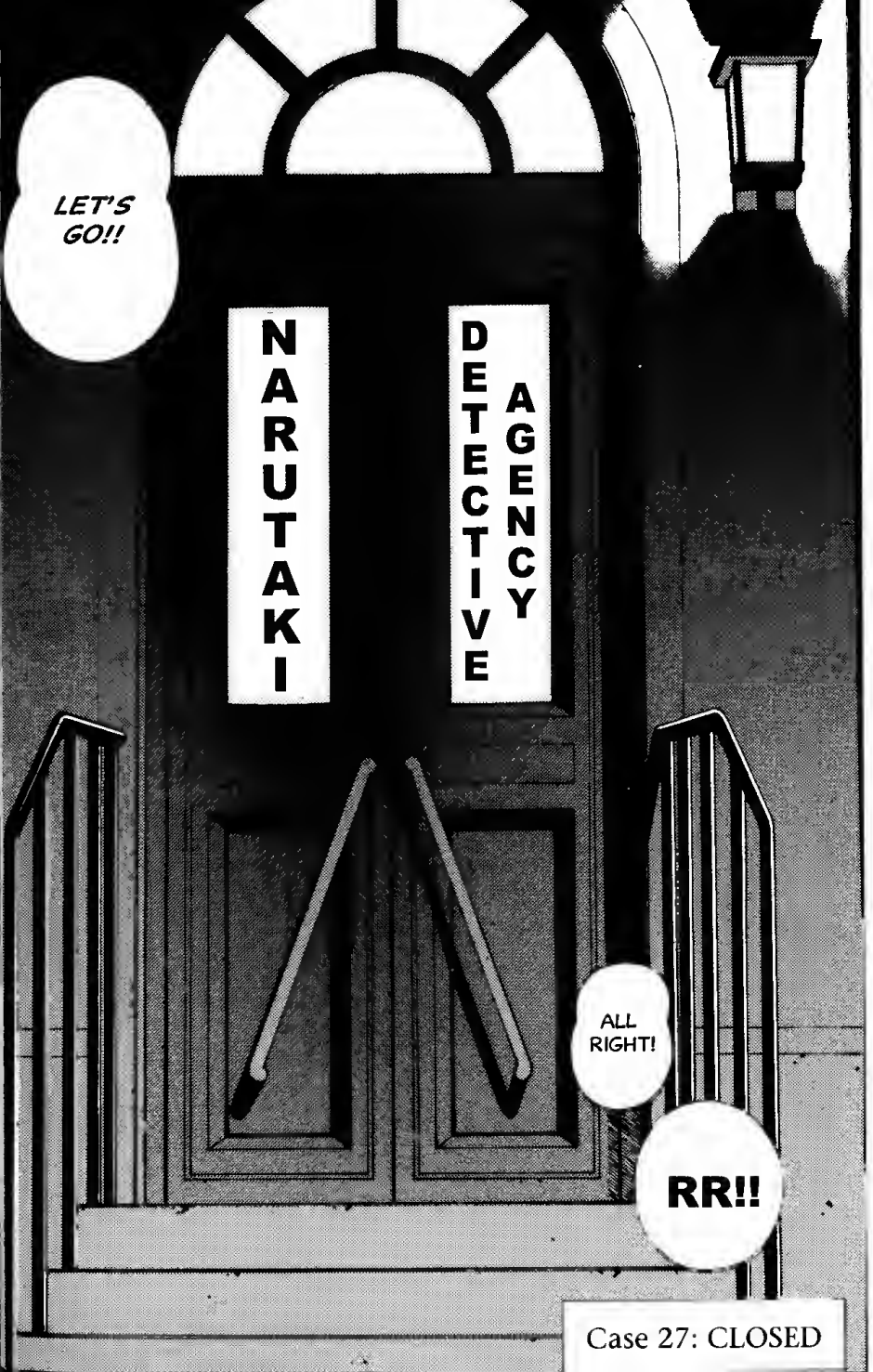
OKAY.
THEN I GUESS WE SHOULD GET BACK.
YES.


KRCH
KRCH

!

LING LING, GORIKI.
HM?

STEAM CITY IS A WONDERFUL PLACE.
HWOOOO
HWOOOO
MY FATHER RISKED HIS LIFE FOR THIS CITY. I'LL FOLLOW IN HIS FOOTSTEPS AS ITS GUARDIAN!



Case 27: CLOSED

Kia Asamiya made his Manga debut in 1986 as the artist for the fantasy series *Vagrants*. Since then, he has worked on many different stories, including *Silent Möbius*, *Dark Angel*, *Martian Successor Nadesico* and the manga adaptation of *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace*—all of which have been (or are currently being) translated into English, making Asamiya one of the most widely published manga artists in America. His current projects include *Dark Angel: Phoenix Resurrection*, an original color work made for American publication, more *Star Wars* manga, and the official manga adaptation of *Batman*. Most recently, Asamiya illustrated the Thor story that appears in *Marvel Double Shot #1*, and has served a stint as a regular penciller for *The Uncanny X-Men*.

Saras & Kickthekitty